

SAYINGS AND DOINGS.
A
SERIES
OF
SKETCHES FROM LIFE.

Full of wise saws and modern instances.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
FRIEND OF THE FAMILY,

(CONCLUDED.)

TEN minutes had not elapsed before Ford returned to the inn; his looks full of surprise and dismay.

"They are gone," said he to Edward, who raised himself to catch the first intelligence of the success of his embassy.

"Gone?"

"The servant says they left the Rectory immediately after despatching a packet to you, and are not to return for some time."

"She is lost to me eternally," said Edward, "and there is but one step left for me to take."

"Follow her," said Ford, "follow her, by all means."

"No, by no means, Sir; I will follow my father; which road has he taken? an appeal to him, an explanation of all the circumstances, must set every thing to rights."

“ I strongly protest against that measure,” said Ford, “ and I must insist upon it, that you abandon it at once. Pursue the young lady if you like, but to irritate your father uselessly, and ——”

“ Insist, Sir !” said Edward, “ insist ! This is strong language, Mr. Ford, when applied to me ; and induces me, coupled as it is with the unaccountable conduct of my father, and the extraordinary manner in which he expresses himself of the Dallings, to apprehend foul play somewhere, which, by Heavens ! I will sift to the bottom.”

“ Sift as you will, young gentleman, you will find the Quixotic scheme of pursuing his Lordship madness and folly. He is gone, irrevocably gone, from England, and all pursuit is useless.”

“ Useless or not, by Heavens ! I will attempt it,” said Edward.

“ Of course, if you like it, Sir,” observed Ford ; “ I have no power to stop you, but I warn you of the consequences of the attempt.”

“ I defy the consequences !”

“ Well then,” said Ford, “ if you have thus suddenly made up your mind, my carriage shall be ordered, and we will proceed together.”

“ No, Sir,” said Edward, “ I will go alone ; in the voice of Nature will I plead to a parent : I need no advocate but her.”

“ As you please, Sir,” said Ford, bowing coldly ; “ I see my kind offices are rejected. You must now follow your own schemes, and I quit you, remarking that you will repent this rashness before you are much older.”

Saying which, this “ Friend of the Family” left the room and the house, with what intentions we shall presently see. Edward desired a man might be despatched to an inn on the high road, where he had left his carriage when he came down, and after hurrying his servant in packing up, sent to know the route Lord Belmont had taken, and having ascertained that his Lordship had gone upwards towards Bath, he ordered horses to be ready for the carriage the moment it arrived, determining at the same time to despatch his servant *per* mail to London, to wait his father’s arrival there, in case he himself should miss him.

While anxiously standing at the inn-door, during this period of suspense and inactivity, Edward was accosted by a smartish, shabby-genteel youngish man, wearing a white hat, an olive-green surtout, somewhat seedy, and a

black cravat, who held in his hand a packet of, what turned out to be bills of announcement for the opening of the theatre in Emmerton, of which he was the manager. There was a dapper pertness about the man's manner, a perfect self-satisfaction and good opinion of his own talents and appearance, which promised much amusement to the curious in humanity; but Edward's mind was ill at ease, and he received the proffered bill with indifference and a formal bow, which, however, did not abash the Somersetshire Daggerwood, who, like all persons in all stations, and under all circumstances, &c. thought himself, his theatre, and the first night of his season, objects of universal contemplation and general importance; and who imagining also that Edward *must* have heard of the formidable hostility opposed to the dramatic amusements of the place by the several saints of the neighbourhood, observed to him, "that in spite of the animosity of the methodists, they had gotten permission to open the campaign."

"Indeed, Sir," said Edward, "I was not aware that any serious opposition was likely to be offered to the performances; is it on the part of the rector, or ——?"

“ Oh dear, no, Sir, by no manner of means,” said the manager, “ we find nothing but ‘ liberal opinions’ from ‘ the Lord of the Manor’ downwards; it is only the ‘ Village Lawyer,’ Sir, and his ‘ Child of Nature,’ who have caused the very ‘ Devil to Pay’ amongst us. They have endeavoured to cut us out of our best hits, and shut up our shop; nay, Sir, they threaten us with the stocks in *this* world, and something worse in the next, if we persist in our ‘ abominations.’ ”

“ What, is Mr. Ford so extremely violent in his dislike of your proceedings?”

“ You’ve hit him, Sir; you’ve hit him,—as Shakspeare says, ‘ I would you knew Ford, Sir, that you might avoid him if you saw him.’ It is he, Sir, or rather his virgin daughter, who loathes and detests our profession. ‘ Vagabond’ is the term she applies to *us*, for the same reason that the world calls her father ‘ gentleman,’ *id est*, because the law allows, and custom sanctions it;—it is *she*, and a pious painter and glazier, now a preacher, who level all their artillery against us.”

“ I had no conception of the strength of her zeal,” said Edward, little knowing what he said, and caring still less.

“ Her zeal is stupendous, Sir, like the Quaker body who went forty miles to persuade a boxer not to fight. What has this young lady done? Finding that force cannot stop us, she has actually sent for me to go to her house this evening after tea, to dissuade me from acting, upon the mere score of its irreligion and immorality. She is to be aided by her reverend glazier, who (you’ll forgive the quibble, Sir,) is, indeed, a very pains-taking man.”

“ Miss Ford undertake to lecture *you*, Sir?”

“ By my faith, ’tis true, my Lord; it is quite extraordinary what your female partisan, political or religious, will undertake when once she starts. I, Sir, I, who have seen the world, for ‘all the world’s a stage,’ as the incomparable Billy says, I, Sir, have ‘hovered about the enemy, and marked the road they took,’—Douglas—There, Sir—forgive the conceit, I am at Home. This miracle of morality has been beating up for recruits to a remonstrance, and is in an actual fever, lest the fat gentleman in the flaxen, who lives at the Lord’s house in the Park yonder, should arrive, as he is expected hourly to do, whose powerful influence in our support she fears will undermine all her efforts at my conversion.”

“It seems a curious speculation, Sir, to attempt your conversion.”

“Convart, Sir,” said the player, “parvart, you mean, as Scrub says; but there is nothing in it of difficulty. I am as easily moulded as putty, take an impression like wax, and having led a Protean life from my youth upwards, put off my manners with my habits. My adventures are not uninteresting, Sir. I was originally bred to the bar.”

“The bar, Sir?”

“Yes, Sir, of my father’s most respectable tap in the Whitechapel-road; but I had a soul above ‘pewter-pots,’ and having lent an ear ‘to the king of *clubs*,’ as I always called Mr. Biddle (from the sovereign sway he held over our convivial assemblies), I entered the press-gang.”

“I confess, Sir, I do not understand ——”

“The literary line, Sir: I became a doer of small paragraphs for morning newspapers, and, having received a liberal education, *id est*, at the charity-school of my native parish, undertook to collect intelligence and *make* accidents, in both of which pursuits I succeeded wonderfully. All the extraordinary escapes of persons out of two-pair-of-stairs windows at fires—all the miraculous preservations of

young ladies from drowning upon water parties—boiling of bees to make them frisky, and catching pike with repeating-watches in their stomachs going as if nothing had happened to them—pigs eating up little children in Ireland, and sea-serpents in America one hundred and forty-five feet six inches long!—these, Sir, these were the fruits of this prolific brain; but it would not do—I was poorly paid, and overworked. I had but one penny per line for casualties, and one and ninepence a-piece for critiques. I was at that time, Sir, obliged to burn a whole village or inundate a province for elevenpence three farthings, till at last, Sir, I was introduced to an actor, at once, a credit to the profession, and an ornament to human nature.

“ I was seized with a Rosciomania, and my poor father, who had long lived upon his ale, being at length stretched upon his *bier*, (you will pardon the apparent inappropriateness of the jest,) I turned to the Thespian art with all the ardour of youth, and went to it like a ‘ French falconer.’ ”

“ Indeed, Sir,” said Edward, looking at his watch;—anxiously waiting the appearance of the carriage.

“ And then,” said the player—

“ He drew a dial from his poke,
“ And looking on it with lack lustre eye
“ Says very wisely—it is ten o’clock.”

“ Faith, Sir,” said Edward, “ I wish it were no later.”

“ Not wearied with me yet? I trust, Sir,” said the hero of the sock and buskin, “ I *do* love to get an audience—there is no creature on earth so truly valuable in society as your patient listener. I, Sir, I had heard of Garrick, and I thought —— perhaps you have read Mr. Archdeacon Nares’s book, Sir?”

“ Yes, on the Liturgy,” said Edward.

“ By no means, Sir,—‘ Thinks I to Myself ;’ capital little bit, 2 vols. 8vo. I reviewed it in the Edinburgh.”

“ In the Edinburgh—what the Edinburgh Review?”

“ To be sure: I wrote the revolutionary articles in that work for three years by way of practice in running hand. You have heard of Messrs. Magnificus and Ignotus, I suppose—blue and yellow, and all that? I, Sir, was the Ignotus—the editor, the ‘ Magnificus.’ I found matter, he polished; I made the pud-

ding, he popped in the plums—but we quarrelled. One night at a public-house I was foolish enough to brag. Hazy, Sir, you understand : smoking and drinking.—I bragged of an article I had written in the Edinburgh. It is a thing, perhaps, the least likely in the world for a man to do : indeed, no man upon the face of the earth would have said any thing about it,—but I was in a cellar—below it—suffice it to say, I bragged. I was overheard by the waiter, who was a newspaper-writer himself, he told the editor of a journal for which he was employed, and so it reached Lincoln's Inn, and I was discarded ; since which, Sir, I have been at all in the ring—I play tragedy, I flatter myself not much worse than Kemble ; in comedy I am (without being one of the '*servum pecus*') said to be on a par with Munden ; in light airy parts, Jones is jealous of me, and when I played Loony Mactwolter, Johnstone left the stage. I'm not vain, Sir, but still with all my talents I didn't hit : envy, Sir, that gorgon which alike keeps down authors and actors, drove me from the stage. Kemble was an actor as well as a manager—you understand ? ' writes himself,' as the joke goes."

" Perfectly, Sir," said Edward, who received

his conversation as the wall of a fives-court takes a ball, and with much the same effect, for the more sharply the words were given in, the quicker they were played at him again.

“ Driven from the stage by prejudice and party, (the Tories hated me, Sir, for what I had done anonymously,) I started an entertainment of my own; thought it a hit, and no copy. I could imitate ducks, pigs, fireworks, and wheelbarrows—stand on my head—dance a hornpipe on a pewter plate—leap over fifteen chairs and a dinner-table, and sing all the comic songs that ever were written: it would not do, Sir. First night of performance at Guildford, in Surrey,—long room, White Hart—Serjeant Onslow in the church-yard; gothic house with pretty maids opposite the inn—roasted loin of pork for dinner—opened—seventeen people full grown, and two little girls under age. Didn’t pay for candles. Tried at Petersfield—wore a hat like the mayor; ‘*semper eadem*,’ worse and worse;—cut the connexion, and once more embarked as you see.”

“ Ah!” said Edward, “ I beg your pardon, Sir, but here’s my carriage, and I can neither see nor hear any more at present.”

“ Perhaps on my benefit night, Sir, I might presume—with a London star and the lovely Miss —— ?”

“ Ay, ‘ay,” said our hero, interrupting him, “ some other time, Sir.”

“ Nay—but, Sir, ——”

At this moment the carriage appeared turning the corner, and Ford, considerably agitated, was seen approaching by the other side of the street. The poor player, who had “ strutted and fretted” nearly his hour, was heard no more, but turned into the little parlour behind the bar to enquire who the gentleman was who had conditionally promised to take a box on his night, and to satisfy the cravings of nature upon an under-done mutton chop with a facing of white fat, half cold, and some bilious looking girkins in an earthenware vine-leaf, which with a pint of that liquor which in the true cockney jargon he called “ all Hail Macbeth,” formed the repast of our sorry Roscius.

Ford met Edward, and with no very amiable expression of countenance said :—

“ I find, Sir, you are resolved to follow Lord Belmont.”

“ Immediately, Ford. I see no other chance for me.”

“ You had better not make the attempt. I forewarn you it will be unsuccessful, Sir.”

“ Then it must be so, for made it shall be, upon my honour.”

“ Then, Sir, here our communication on the subject ends—and so good morning; but before we part, I *warn you* not to persevere.”

“ I am not a child, Mr. Ford,” said Edward; “ nor will I be bullied from my purpose.”

“ Bullied! Mr. Bramley?”

“ Bullied, Sir, I find no word so apt at the moment, and give me leave to say, that the more I reflect upon the terms in which my father’s letter was conceived, and the extraordinary tenor of his second note, the more convinced I am, as I told you this morning, that there has been foul play somewhere.”

“ Mr. Bramley,” said Ford, turning pale with rage, “ the Lord has given me meekness enough to bear, and religious feeling enough to forbear, and I am grateful for his beneficence unto me; but this return I was unprepared for, even in this world of wickedness. Farewell, Sir, when next we meet, this unkind, ungrateful tone may be changed.”

“ Ford, forgive me! I ask your pardon—I am hasty—give me your hand.”

“ It is an honour, Sir, I must beg to decline. The die is cast—follow your own inclinations, and repent: here, I perceive, is your carriage ready—I leave you, but once more warn you.”

Saying which, he bowed coldly, and went home to dinner, “ with what appetite he might.”

Edward was completely overcome by the contending feelings which assailed him: he hardly knew what he did, what he said; and throwing himself into the carriage left the town in which a little day before every object of his solicitude was accumulated, but which, under the altered circumstances, was a blank, a desert.

The horses and the wheels in motion, his active mind was employing itself in calculating when and where he should overtake his father, whither the Dallings were gone, for, to a second and third message which he had despatched to the Rectory in the course of the morning, he could obtain no satisfactory answer on that point. He was rehearsing, like his friend the manager, the scene which was likely to be acted by him and his noble and irascible

parent, when, at the distance of about two miles from Emmerton, the carriage was suddenly stopped.

Edward looked from the carriage-window and saw two men, who, from their appearance he at first thought might be footpads, except, indeed, that the unsophisticated inhabitants of the west of England are little addicted to crime, but who in an authoritative manner commanded the post-boys to pull up, and immediately afterwards one of them opening the carriage-door said :—

“ Mr. Bramley, this is an unpleasant affair, and I am extremely sorry to have to do such a job—I have a writ against you, Sir, for two thousand four hundred pounds.”

“ A what ? Sir,” said Bramley.

“ A writ, Sir, at the suit of Mr. Amos Ford.”

“ Oh ! there must be some mistake, Sir,” said our hero.

“ No, Squire,” said the ‘ attendant swain,’ “ no mistake ; it is an uncommon unpleasant affair, because ‘ta’n’t bailable.”

“ What do you mean ? I do not understand.”

“ It’s our duty, Sir, to make it as clear as

possible, but we know nothing of the facts. Here is the writ, it is for the amount of a bond, with judgment confessed by you, and you are now taken in execution."

"What is to be done?"

"Why, perhaps, your honour would rather pay the money and settle the matter at once?"

"Where am I to get it, Sir?" said Edward with great *naïveté*; "and why do I owe it?"

"Why? Them 'ere is questions as we cannot undertake to answer," said the principal officer; "but if you will come to my house, Sir, for a day or two, perhaps the matter may be accommodated."

"A day or two, Sir!—a thousand years!"

"No, Sir, not so long as that I hope," said the second in command, wiping his nose with his coat-sleeve, and giving a roguish look at the postboy, who stood rubbing his saddle and wondering.

"There *must* be some mistake," said Bramley: "I owe no such money—perhaps you will return with me to Mr. Ford, and ——?"

"Mr. Ford, Sir, is the plaintiff; he ordered us to execute the writ, and told us it was quite needless applying to him unless we could bring him the money."

“ My suspicions are not ill founded ; Ford is a scoundrel ! ” said Edward.

“ I can’t really say, Sir,” said the officer: “ it may be—he is counted very respectable as a lawyer in these parts.”

“ New lights break in upon me; but, what is to be done on the instant?”

“ I am afraid, Sir, we must trouble you to go to Taunton: perhaps, if you were to write to my Lord,—”

“ Write, man! where am I to write to? I have no more idea where Lord Belmont is at this moment than you have.”

“ The Squire has been shabbily treated somewheres,” said Phillips’s man to Phillips.

“ Well, gentlemen,” said Edward, “ this is my first appearance in such a situation. I can have no cause of complaint against you, and therefore you must do with me as you please.”

“ On to Taunton then,” said Phillips to the postboy, who was the only one of the group who demurred to this movement, as Wellington was the destination to which only he legally could betake himself, and accordingly, with Mr. Phillips and his partner agreeably placed in the rumble-tumble behind, which from the circumstance of Edward’s having travelled without a

servant was vacant and at their service, they proceeded to that town which gives the title of duke to the greatest hero England ever had to boast of.

At the White Hart, fresh horses were procured, and as Mr. Phillips and his partner were somewhat notorious in the neighbourhood, a curious crowd began to gather round the carriage. Edward's impulse was to proceed as fast as possible to some resting-place where he might at least address letters to some of his friends. Few, indeed, he had ; and those who should have been nearest and dearest were removed from their habitations expressly on his account. He resolved to write to Ford, in terms far from equivocal, as well as to Dalling ; because, let what might happen, he could not fancy that his father's anger, however much excited, could have caused his present embarrassment, more particularly as his last injunctions related to bondage of a very different nature. It was clear that Ford was the mover of the scheme, whatever its object ; and by the time the carriage of the heir of all the Bramleys stopped at the gate of Taunton jail, our hero had made up his mind that Ford was a wolf in sheep's clothing, and that the " Friend of the

Family" was its bitterest foe,—but for his motives—they were still inexplicable.

The appearance of an elegant equipage at the door of the melancholy building in question, caused even a greater sensation than had been excited at Wellington, and groups of "children of a larger growth" ranged themselves on the high bank by the road-side to see the culprit as some supposed him to be—the great author of some great crime.—Edward was anxious to escape all this, and was displeased at what he thought an unnecessary delay; however, when Phillips returned to the carriage, and after a certain quantity of whispering and humming and ha'ing with the jailor, who came to the door of his chateau, and a man in black of whose office our poor hero was ignorant, whispered the postboy, and the carriage was again in motion, Edward felt that the *demur* was advantageous to his cause, and that feeling was strengthened when he found himself driven to the Castle Inn in the market-place, into which, as soon as the waiters, &c. had opened all the doors and put down all the steps, he was ushered as became the dignity of the heir of Belmont.

When he had reached the room designed for

him, Phillips shut the door, and informed him that having made his capture and entered his name in the prison-books, he had sent back his man to Ford to tell him the fact, and to endeavour to compromise the matter; all of which was Hebraic to Edward, to whose assertions that he knew nothing of the debt Mr. Phillips appeared to pay less attention than he did to any other observation or remarks made by the same gentleman.

“ You can remain here, Sir, with me,” said Phillips, “ till my man returns; and if the answer is bad, why it will be better to go down yonder after dusk.”

“ Yonder! What! to the prison, Sir?” said Edward.

“ I haven’t no option whatsoever, Sir; it ought to be a lesson to you, Sir, not to give a bond with judgment again.”

“ Faith,” said Edward, “ if I had had judgment, I never should have given a bond, and upon my honour I do not remember ever having done such a thing.”

“ Oh, well, Sir, that’s as may be, can’t account for them things, Sir; all I can do I will, and make matters as agreeable as possible to you under the circumstances.”

“ I am extremely obliged for your consideration, Sir,” said Edward.

“ I must stay with you altogether, Sir, till we get an answer from Emmerton,” said Phillips; “ howsomever, that will only be company for you, and it’s pleasant to have somebody to speak to in these cases.”

“ What would you choose for dinner, gentlemen,” said a well-dressed waiter, who entered the room with a promising bill of fare fluttering in his hand.

“ Dinner!” said Edward, in a tone which at first discouraged the waiter.

“ Yes, Sir,” said Phillips, “ dinner: I assure you I’m rather peckish.”

This was, as *he* thought, the climax of his miseries, and of Mr. Phillips’s familiarity; but he was mistaken. “ Order what you please, Sir,” said Edward, “ and I dare say your taste will suit mine.”

Phillips was evidently pleased with this *carte blanche*, and proceeded to peruse the bill of fare, occasionally turning to Edward—“ Do you like soles, Sir—uncommon good here, Sir—gets ’em from Bath by the wan: d’ ye mind inious, Sir;” and so on, till Edward was com-

pelled to force him to follow his own fancy, rather than be called into the consultation.

When dinner had been ordered, Edward desired to have some writing-paper, and pens and ink, and Phillips directed the waiter to bring him the Taunton Courier, "I likes to see how them 'ere radicals comes on, Sir: there's some black sheep in this neighbourhood. We've our eye upon 'em, Sir: it becomes men in my situation to be sharp, Sir."

"Truly it does," said Edward, whose thoughts at that moment were in the darkest nook of Emmerton grove.

"They are uncommon wary, Sir, that's the truth on 't—as deep as Garrick, them chaps; but I'm up to them, and down upon them too, Sir."

"Oh yes," replied the agonized young man, who waited the arrival of the writing materials as the greatest possible relief to be expected for the present.

They came; and while Phillips was spelling the whole of the provincial novelties in the Taunton paper, Bramley was endeavouring to explain his situation, his anxieties, his misery, to Dalling, under cover to whom he enclosed a letter to his father.

The preparation of these despatches occupied the time till dinner was served, which consisted of a couple of fried soles, a tureen of tripe boiled with onions, and a bullock's heart roasted and stuffed, a huge suet pudding, and a dish of marrowbones ; such being the taste of Mr. Phillips, who catered upon the occasion. A bowl of clouted cream, with innumerable dried currants in it, was produced as a general sauce to every thing else, as well as to a roasted sucking pig, which with three fowls on one dish, formed the second course. At the moment the first detachment of this very extraordinary repast was put down, the master of the house suddenly made his appearance, and said that Mr. Humbug of Burrowdale Park having seen the carriage in the yard, had enquired where Mr. Bramley was, and begged to be allowed to pay his respects.

"What's to be done?" said Edward.

"I didn't say a word, of course, Sir," whispered the landlord cautiously, "about the nature of your visit here, nor the circumstances under which you are."

"Well, but say—say——"

"If you like to have the gemman up, Sir, I

needn't speak. I'm sure he doesn't know me, and I can pass for your friend."

"True, and I may gain some information from him; say—say that I have a gentleman with me, but that I shall be happy to see Mr. Humbug."

"That I'm sure you will, egad," said Humbug himself, who was at the landlord's heels, "and so am *I* delighted to see *you*. How are you, my excellent young friend? I mean to join you at dinner, if you will give me leave: 'gad, there seems to be plenty, Bramley."

"Yes," said Edward, "our county is famous for substantials."

Humbug looked at Phillips, who was waiting to sit down, and was altogether so questionable a person in appearance, that Edward hesitated to introduce him by name, hoping that he would take a hint, and officiate, perhaps, as a servant, from which soothing state of doubt he was, however, released by his saying,

"Come, Muster Bramley, Sir, the fat 'ill all freeze upon this here tripe, if we stands a-talkin' in this manner."

Humbug's surprise at the moment was unbounded, but Edward rallying, bade Phillips sit

down, which, with no small appearance of conscious weight and importance, he accordingly did.

It may seem to my reader on the first blush of this affair, that the most natural thing imaginable, would have been the immediate disclosure of all the circumstances by Edward to Humbug, and I believe at the very point of the history to which we have attained, Edward had serious thoughts of declaring the facts to that gentleman, but when he recollected all the circumstances which had transpired with respect to the Humbug family and Rose, the character of the man himself, his talkativeness, his love of satire and ridicule, the stories which would be made and brought into play, the hope either that the occurrence altogether originated in some mistake, or that Ford's answer to Phillips's application would be favourable, his resolution failed, and he determined, if possible, to conceal the whole affair from his *friend*. Were the real truth ascertained, I think it would be found that the apprehension of an appearance of solicitude for pecuniary assistance was the principal cause of his ultimate decision to pre-

serve silence upon all the occurrences which had taken place.

Dinner proceeded, and little transpired to develope the character of the bailiff to Humbug; for in truth, the conversation at one dinner is very similar to that at another. After his fish, however, Jack, between a desire to make the amiable, and a wish to know something more of a man who evidently kept his high-spirited young friend under restraint, invited him to take a glass of wine.

“ Thank you, Sir,” said Phillips, “ I seldom drinks wine, obleeged to you all the same; I’d rather take a drap o’ short, if it’s all one to you.”

“ Of what, Sir?” said Humbug, smiling, and looking exceedingly civil.

“ Mr. Phillips means to say that he prefers spirits, I believe,” said Edward.

“ Oh! habit, Sir—habit is every thing,” said Jack; “ accustomed to live abroad, I suppose?”

“ Oh no, I believe not,” said Edward, colouring up, and endeavouring to check his *friend* in an explanation which he was evidently about to make.

"No, Sir," said Phillips, "han't been much out of these parts—no offence though."

Humbug was completely silenced, and resolved for the present to make no farther efforts towards ice-breaking with his new acquaintance. The civility of "to-wards your good health," which the *soi-disant* 'arbiter elegantiarum' received in return for a courteous bow towards the stranger, threw him into a perplexity, from which his extreme good breeding and the presence of Phillips himself, rendered his speedy release very improbable.

Humbug, however, was more than usually sprightly, and whatever opinion he might have formed of his friend's companion, he saw in him one of those desirable listeners of whom the Emmerton manager had spoken in such rapturous terms. He felt that he had an opportunity of "astonishing the native," and proceeded to avail himself of it accordingly.

"Where are Lady Honoria and the young ladies?" asked Edward, affecting to look pleased with the present company, and solicitous about those who were absent.

"Her Ladyship," said Jack, "has been literally eaten up alive in London. We had a

house in Arlington-street for the season—infernal three-rooms-on-a-floor place, furnished—mere temporary affair—full from morning till night—literally besieged—the girls devoured—never saw people so much admired in all my life ; your friend here does not know how much they deserve it ; I may be partial, you'll forgive a father, but they really *are* fine creatures, and so the world seems to think, upon my honour, and so does their mother.”

“ I heard,” said Edward, “ that one of them was likely to marry.”

“ Mere rumour—mere rumour, upon my life ! Lord George Lanky has been dangling after Charlotte all the season, but it won't do. There's blood to be sure, but he has not a guinea in the world, literally, upon my life !—fact, not a guinea ! The Duchess of Deptford told me herself that his whole allowance from his father went in tooth-brushes and Eau du Cologne. Uncommon good, eh ? Upon my life she said so, eh.”

“ They are not rich.”

“ No, that they are not,” said Phillips, warming with the subject and the stiff punch which

he was assiduously drinking out of tumblers.
 " I knows them of old."

" Indeed!" exclaimed Humbug, half incredulous, " you know the Lankys, eh?"

" Yes, Sir, I does; I had one of the young ones a-staying in my house nigh upon three weeks afore he could get out."

" Ill, Sir?—confined, I suppose?"

" Yes," said Edward, " confined: my friend is the most hospitable creature in the world; the moment a man, who happens to be in difficulty, is properly recommended to his notice, his doors are instantly open to him, nor will he suffer him to quit his roof till he gets his affairs arranged."

" Excellent trait! 'pon my honour,—very charming—very amiable," said Humbug, raising his glass at the same moment, to ascertain whether he really saw the said acquaintance of the illustrious family in question picking his teeth with a two-pronged fork.

" Nice girls, Sir, the Ladies Lanky," said Jack.

" Can't say as how I ever see'd none on 'em, Sir."

" Oh! only acquainted with the sons?—eh!"

“ But pray,” said Edward, anxious beyond measure to divert the conversation, “ are you on your way to Burrowdale ?”

“ Right on end : I parted with the ladies at Wells yesterday, to go to a cricket match across the country : infernally bad sport, after all. We got confoundedly licked ; the grass was as dry as a turnpike road, and as smooth as a looking-glass. ‘ Gad, Sir, as you know, I’m a crack player—made the match, and was out in my first run : deuced odd, Sir, but you may depend upon it, that there are no bats made now equal to those which we used to get in ninety-two. However, after the bat comes the ball, as a wag would say ; and this evening, as you may see, if you will just look out of the window at the splendid preparations, there is to be a dance at the Town Hall, and the girls and Lady Honoria, who slept at her cousin’s near Glastonbury, are to meet me here. Here we stay to-night, and to-morrow I patronize the opening of the Emmerton theatre in spite of the methodists and quakers ; and I have ordered, by way of jest, ‘ The Hypocrite,’ and ‘ Love Laughs at Locksmiths.’—Are you going back ?”

“No, no, not immediately,” said Edward, “I am engaged to my friend for a day or two.”

“Ah, by the way, I met the Dallings as I was coming here this morning. I should not be very much surprised if they were to be at this very ball: they tell me they are going to Wales for some time, and are staying somewhere in this neighbourhood for a day or two. Emmerton seems likely to be deserted; but, however, ‘Time will bring back the roses,’ and I trust we shall all be as merry as larks in the autumn.”

“Going to Wales?” said Edward.

“So they said; but there is a Doctor somebody here, a man in very good practice, but of very bad politics, who knows all about them, and after we have finished our wine, if you’ll step over the way with me, you shall, if you wish it, hear farther particulars.”

“Umph!” said Phillips, indicating thereby that his innocent captive could *not* step over the way under any circumstances without him.

“But,” said Humbug, “the best thing you can do is, to come to the ball at once; Lady Honoria will be delighted; you’ll see all the

belles; and your friend here, if he stays, perhaps will—or perhaps—he—”

In this fatal pause, Phillips said,

“ Muster Bramley can’t go there, Sir, not on no account.”

“ No, not I, I’m positively engaged at another place,” said Edward.

“ There’ll be the High Sheriff and his family,” said Humbug, “ and you know them.”

“ Umph!” again, said Phillips, still louder, “ that’s *no go!*”

“ No go! he! he!” faltered Humbug, “ your friend is facetious—very odd—he! he!” and up went the glass again.

“ A way he has, Sir—a very ‘ taking manner,’ ” said Edward.

“ ‘Gad, I don’t understand all this, but I suppose there must be a lady in the case, or you would not refuse the attractions of the lively waltz. Of course I must go; all the leading men of the county have made a point of our being here, or else, upon my life, I should rather have stayed for a few more days in town.”

The waiter entered, and gave a note to Phillips, who, without any farther ceremony, broke

it open, sticking a cherry in his mouth by the stalk which he happened to have in his hand at the moment.

Much depended upon this said note, much more than Humbug could anticipate; and while the bailiff was spelling the scrawl of Ford's clerk, Jack said (*sotto voce*) to Edward, "Who is your friend?"

"I'll tell you some other time," said Edward. "Well, Mr. Phillips, what's the result?"

"Read it yourself, Sir," said Phillips, tossing the billet across the table; "there's no hope—must bundle to-night." It contained these words:

"SIR,

"Mr. Ford can take no steps in the business till the principal and interest are paid, together with costs. "Your humble Servant,

"C. IMPSON."

"Mr. Phillips,
"Officer of the Sheriff of Somerset."

"Very well," said Edward, as philosophically as he could, "then we will go about nine."

"Locks up afore that, Sir," said Phillips.

“ Well then, whenever you please, Mr. Phillips ; help yourself, Sir.”

“ Going to visit some eccentric person, I suppose ?” said Jack, “ not your own master—cursed bore those early hours. My father-in-law, the Earl, was one of those matter-of-fact, manual exercise people, who had no notion of diverging—always dined at five. Only conceive—I used to dine with the old fellow before I was married by way of breakfast, and then have my regular feed at eleven, sit till sun-rise, and lie in bed till the sun was down again next day.”

“ That’s pitching it strong, howsumever,” said Phillips ; “ I takes that to be gammon, now.”

“ Sir,” said Humbug, “ what does your friend say ?”

“ I really don’t know, but I know he *means* no offence,” stammered Edward.

At this critical juncture, when decanters were hardly secure upon their bottoms, and wine-glasses were on the tip-toe for a dance at Mr. Phillips’s head, the waiter entered the apartment, and delivered a message to Humbug, which informed him of the arrival of his lady and her grace-like daughters at the Doc-

tor's residence, where they were to dress for the evening.

Humbug, in truth, was not displeased at the opportunity which presented itself of escaping from the uncouth society of Mr. Phillips; and little doubting, whatever might be the tie between them, that Edward would be as much charmed as himself with an excuse for quitting his companion for a short time, turned to our hero, and said:

"Now, then, is your best opportunity to pay your respects to Lady Honoria and the girls, before they commence their elaborate preparations for the ball; come over, they will be delighted to see you."

"I should be very happy; but—but—"

"Oh yes, if you like," said Phillips, intending to be good-natured; "you can go, you know, Sir; I'll just bundle ~~them~~ with you."

"What! are you inseparable?" said Humbug; "are you like the unhappy creature in the Arabian Nights, saddled with a man upon your shoulders eternally?"

"I hope not eternally," said Edward; "but you must excuse me; in a day or two I shall

have the pleasure of seeing you at Burrowdale, till then we must only live on hope."

"As you please," said Humbug, "as you please; only it looks ill-natured not to go over and speak to the girls. I assure ye, you are an uncommon favourite."

"You flatter me."

"Not I, upon my life—I hate flattery—'gad, I speak truth, so do the girls—candid and open as the day, as easily seen through as a single house;—but I really must be off. If you should change your mind about the ball ——"

"Umph," grunted Phillips.

"Well, if you must not change your mind then, we shall meet in a day or two, as you say—and so God bless you!"

Saying which, and bowing with as much civility as amounted to something very like rudeness to Phillips, Jack bounded out of the room, and in endeavouring to skip three stairs at once, was precipitated down the first flight, and was picked up on the mat at the landing-place by the chambermaid, who did more mischief to the evergreen vaulter by her observations of "Poor dear old gentleman!"—"So heavy too!"—"Thank goodness he is not hurt!"

what a mercy !”—“ Here’s your wig, Sir,” &c. &c. than he had received by the accident, which he declared was nothing at all. “ All the fault of a cursed pea-shell,” said Jack, and whisking a switch which he carried in his hand to shew his perfect sprightliness, limped friskily over the street to the house which contained the better half, and three half-quarters of his extraordinary family.

At another time the society of Jack would have had less attraction, and his departure been less regretted by Edward than on this trying afternoon. When he was gone, and no one was left, save the officer who was to conduct him shortly to a worse place, all his thoughts which had been diverted from himself by the volatile conversation of the man of the town, came full upon him, and, as he saw people arriving at the Town Hall, and heard the busy note of preparation sounding, and felt that *he* could not mingle with the throng, that to him the white pavement of the market-place was forbidden ground, his heart ached—Hammett-street appeared an earthly paradise, and the entertainment of the evening, to which had he been free he would not have thought of

going, rivalled in his mind, at the moment, the gayest fête that ever was given at Brighton or at Chiswick.

Shortly after it grew a little duskish, Phillips's assistant arrived, and, mumbling something to his principal, the said officer of the law insinuated to our hero the necessity of his attendance at the other end of the town, and Edward, hardly conscious of what he was doing, discharged his bill, and prepared to accompany his careful guardian to the mansion of sorrow.

As they proceeded along the market-place, and as if his evil genius was yet unsatisfied, the band in the Assembly-room struck up the very quadrille which Rose had pronounced to be her decided favourite, had copied into her own little music-book, and which was as familiar to Edward's ear as the sound of his own name.

What a thousand associations did the few notes of this dance conjure up in his mind ! how powerful—how exciting ! When we hear the notes to which we long since loved to listen, —when the same chords strike upon the ear, the *perspective* of time is lost, and those who once were loved and loving, flit before us in all

their youthful charms—eyes that must look no more, seem gazing on us—charms that are withered, glow afresh, and smiles, which we must never again behold, are beaming brightly over us ! What Edward's feelings were, it were vain in me to attempt to describe. He had heard the air in happy hours, when Rose Darling would sit and play to him, and every thing around was full of love and peacefulness—he heard it now on his road to prison, and when Rose was far away.

Arrived at the jail, he was somewhat agreeably surprised to find that the jailor and his wife had prepared the neatest room which they possessed for his use, and although the walls were simply white-washed, and quite devoid of “ foreign ornament,” still there was a cleanliness about the sanded floor, and the bed, for which he was not prepared. The extreme civility with which he was received was also soothing to his feelings, and after having enquired of the officer when he thought his friends would answer his letters, when he could hear what would be the probable termination of his adventure ; and after having received the least possible satisfactory answers to all

his enquiries, he dismissed his attendants, and having offered up his prayers to Heaven for his obdurate father and his beloved Rose, retired not only to his "couch" but to sleep, actually fatigued with the mysterious events of the day.

A greater sensation had been created by the arrest of Edward than he or even Ford was aware of; its object, which perhaps my reader will perceive was merely to *detain* the son, and thus prevent his overtaking his father, was more nearly frustrated than the designing agent could have imagined; but the evil genius prevailed, and within a hair's-breadth of the most desired objects, our hero was incarcerated and asleep.

Much, however, was doing of importance to him during those hours which he had past in *durance*; and although some part of the occurrences which took place may appear to such of my readers as are determined upon having nothing but truth in my sketches, somewhat romantic, they are nevertheless copied from nature, and will be found upon enquiry to be only some of those "curious coincidences" which daily occur to every one of us, upon

which we always exclaim “if *this* were put into a novel, it would be called improbable and absurd.”

The truth then is this : Lord Belmont, when he left Emmerton, was in a state of mind ill suited to society or conversation ; he was resolved upon quitting England *for ever*,—a resolution made in the violence of passion and in the heat of anger, but which, so scrupulously nice were his notions of honour, no power upon earth would have induced him to alter, seeing that he had sworn *to himself* never to revisit his native country if his hopes and wishes with respect to his son were (as he apprehended they were likely to be before his arrival) thwarted or frustrated. His first intention, therefore, was to have hurried across the country to Portsmouth, there to embark for his honourable exile ; but, while on his journey, the recollection that he stood pledged to a matrimonial engagement for his son with the daughter of the Duke of Basingstoke, that his precipitate retreat from England would perhaps appear like a manœuvre to avoid the responsibility of breaking off the match, which his own peremptory conduct with respect to Ed-

ward now rendered it absolutely necessary to break off, determined him to seek an interview with the Duke in order to explain the peculiar circumstances under which he had been induced to disturb an arrangement so perfectly satisfactory to the two high contracting powers.

Upon inquiry he found that the Duke and his family were patronizing Tenby, which, by the way, since the establishment of baths, the conversion of the White Lion into the Prince of Saxe Coburg, and the introduction of bells there, has become a popular watering-place for persons whose fortunes and avocations permit them to get quite clear of cockneyism and London smoke in their summer amusements. Thither his Lordship determined to proceed, feeling that his explanations were of a nature *not to be written*; and I really believe my readers as yet have no notion *why* his Lordship *did* so suddenly, so strangely, and so strongly determine upon the marriage of his son to the girl he most cordially abhorred by name, or so strenuously enforced a connexion with the family which he had been taught so fervently to despise.

No matter, time will shew: the idea once

started, the necessity once established in Lord Belmont's mind, the execution was all that remained for consideration; and, accordingly, his Lordship, calculating upon the time which would be saved,—to say nothing of expense, at which, by the way, the richest and most aristocratic amongst us are infinitely more alarmed than their inferiors in rank and property,—resolved on diverging from his road, and turning off at Taunton for the purpose of procuring a vessel which would convey him from Minehead across the Channel to the Welsh coast; and as his Lordship's resolves were rigidly acted upon, he proceeded on his first day's journey towards the house of an old and valued friend, a school-fellow, a fellow-collegian, and once his colleague in Parliament, Sir Thomas Farnbridge, where, upon the strength of their various connexions, he intended (if he found no company staying there) to rest till the following morning, thence to proceed upon his brief yet important voyage.

All this *might* have been enacted according to the *programme*; but while the matter was revolving itself in his Lordship's mind, and as he had passed through Taunton on his way to

Heathfield, Sir Thomas Farnbridge himself appeared before him, mounted on his horse, and followed by his servant. Mutual recognitions took place, and his Lordship thawed miraculously before the warmth of the Baronet, who met him with all the ardour of old friendship, and invited him to his house with all the generous hospitality which proverbially belongs to that part of the British empire in which it was situated.

His Lordship gave the Baronet to understand that his feelings and mind were in such a state as to preclude the possibility of his meeting strangers, and that, if he had any other visitors, he would rather decline the pleasure of a visit to him and pursue his journey forthwith.

“ You are, luckily, safe,” said Sir Thomas ; “ for we have but one family with us, who are staying only for a day or two. My daughters have been endeavouring to prevail upon them to go to a gay ball at Taunton to-night, but I fear unsuccessfully. However, they are of course known to you, and therefore you will not mind them:—I mean the Dallings, your Rector at Emmerton, and his charming daughter ! ”

A child might have felled the noble baron to the earth with a bullrush.

"The Dallings, Sir!" said his Lordship, as soon as he could say any thing, "No, no, indeed, I do *not* know them,—do *you*?"

"And have for these twenty years," said Sir Thomas. "I do not know a better, a more honourable, a more elegantly-minded man than the Doctor; and as for ~~the~~ the girl, my time is past for these things, my dear Lord, but, by Jove, she is perfection."

"Rose Dalling, do you mean?"

"Ay, Rose Dalling, my dear Lord; you seem to know her name pretty well, but you shall see her, if you never have seen her, and judge for yourself; and as he has the cure of your soul, he ought to be, I think, acquainted with your person, which I concluded he was, although in speaking of you, by the way, as I did once this morning, there seemed an embarrassment."

"Embarrassment!" said his Lordship, much moved. "Embarrassment, Farnbridge! I am more interested in that young woman than in any human being alive, except my own son."

His Lordship's agitation astonished and over-

came the Baronet, who, seeing that he had touched some delicate point, gave his horse to his servant and entered the carriage, where, in a short conversation, enquiries were excited which provoked communications—communications began elucidations, and, in short, an order was given, after some conference, for the servant to return to Heathfield with Sir Thomas's horse, and send his carriage to Taunton, whither, much to the surprise of the attendants, the Baron and the Baronet returned together.

How Ford had described the Dallings to Lord Belmont, or what he had said of them, it is not here my object to repeat; but when his Lordship heard his friend, a man of the world, a man of rank and talent, describe them as people highly accomplished, elegant, amiable, and good, he began to doubt where he never had doubted before; and when he recollected the story Ford had told him, to induce him to consent to the hated marriage, and found Rose Dalling the associate of the daughters of his intimate and respected friend, he hesitated between at once introducing himself to the injured family, or *undeceiving* Sir Thomas

as to the real character of the girl. The former course he feared was rash, the latter he saw would be unjust; and having no little confidence in his own judgment and penetration, he determined, in accordance with a suggestion of the Baronet's, to see and judge for himself. In order to effectuate this purpose, he accordingly returned to Taunton with Sir Thomas, whence, leaving his carriage and servants there, it was proposed that he should proceed to Heathfield in the character of a Mr. Harvey, a friend of his host, newly arrived from the West Indies, and under that assumption pass the day in the society of the Dallings.

Nothing could happen more opportunely than the accidental meeting with Sir Thomas, which gave facility to a scheme, towards the safe execution of which all things, indeed, seemed to tend; for neither of Sir Thomas's daughters had seen Lord Belmont since the death of their mother, which occurred when the elder one was not more than twelve years of age, so that there he was secure against detection; and no intercourse having taken place between the domestics when they stop-

ped, and care being taken on the return to Taunton that they should still be kept separate, his Lordship *untitled* himself with the greatest safety, and entering the carriage of the Baronet, proceeded, according to the proposed plan, to Heathfield, where, shortly after his arrival, he was introduced to the young ladies of the family, Dalling and his daughter being yet employed in dressing for dinner, which was ordered at an earlier hour than usual, in order to give time for those who were to attend the ball to decorate themselves accordingly.

The time after Lord Belmont's entrance into Heathfield till the appearance of Rose Dalling, hanging heavily upon his hands, unaccustomed as his Lordship was *in propria personâ* to make the amiable, he was voted somewhat of a bore by the Misses Farnbridge, and they fell to something like underbred whispering and tittering, and speculating whether he would go with them to the ball, whether papa would insist upon their dancing with him, and several other little matters, amongst which was a dread that he *might* be a rich pretender to the hand of one of them; for as the thief sees "in

every bush an officer," so sees an heiress or co-heiress, a lover in every man who approaches her.

At length Dalling made his appearance, and having been introduced to Mr. Harvey, a conversation upon general topics, diversified artfully enough by the stranger for the express purpose, ensued, in which the doctor displayed so much tact, such good feeling, good *politics*, and good sense, that Mr. Harvey was more than ever inclined to doubt the representations which had been made to him; but when the door of the drawing-room opened, and Rose Dalling, full of all the witching allurements of youth and loveliness, entered, when he saw the fine eyes of the sorrowing girl brighten into momentary animation, and her pale cheeks crimson over with a blush at seeing a stranger, when he saw her manner, the easy, playful simplicity, the genuine grace of all her actions, he trembled, and turned pale with anger that he had been deceived; and in less than five minutes established in his own mind the two leading points, that Rose was an angel, and Ford a villain.

Next to Rose Dalling was the stranger

placed at dinner, during which repast his whole attention was devoted to *her*, and with that peculiar talent for which he was famous, he contrived to "*draw her out*" upon most subjects. It was curious to know how, as his respect and admiration for her increased, his hatred for Ford grew; and when, after he had nearly reached the *acmé* of admiration, Dalling happened to mention that he was in remainder for an Irish Barony, and that his grandmother, moreover, was a Seymour, the die was cast; all impediments were overcome—all obstacles conquered: he saw happiness and domestic peace and comfort before him. Still he preserved his *masque*, and in his assumed character pressed the Dallings so earnestly to go to the ball, that it would have been rude and particular to have declined, seeing that he was so ardently supported by the Farnbridges.

Rose strenuously refused, till *her new friend* adopted the use of raillery—talked of "absent lovers," the "sorrows of separation," and ten thousand things which spoke daggers to her, but placed her exactly under the necessity of going to a dance against her will, or of staying at home under the imputation of feeling—what

she really *did* feel. Her father, however, added his wish that she should go, and at length between force and persuasion, a love of quiet and a sense of duty, she consented. When the ladies retired to the toilet, Harvey gradually brought the conversation to Emmerton, spoke of the rectory, of Burrowdale, of Ford, of Edward, and of himself; and just at this point of the conversation, Sir Thomas, for the first time, felt fidgety. Dalling had said very little of Lord Belmont in the morning, but that little was said in a particular tone and with a particular manner, and Sir Thomas feared that he might be somewhat more communicative at a moment when it would be less agreeable than at any other; however, he was soon relieved from his anxiety.

“Pray, Sir,” said Harvey to Dalling, “have you not a son of Lord Belmont’s domesticated with you?”

“No, Sir,” said Dalling, “he has left me; and left me under very painful circumstances. Domestic affairs rendered our separation absolutely necessary; but I have parted from him with sorrow and regret, for more honour, more principle, more talent, and more accomplishment, seldom, if ever, fell to the lot of

one young man. I fear his father does not appreciate his merits, Sir. Lord Belmont I have heard—”

“ Pass the wine, my dear Doctor,” said Sir Thomas, humming and ha’aing and rattling the decanter-stands.

“ Stay, Farnbridge, stay ; let me hear more of this young man,” said the visitor : “ I fear I know him but imperfectly.”

“ I was merely going to remark, Sir,” said Dalling, “ that from the separation which has so long existed between his lordship and his son, he has been unable to trace his progress in life, and considers him still the child he left him. His lordship, however, is at Emmerton now, I believe, and I hope and trust will learn to appreciate the excellence of Mr. Bramley, which has so much endeared him even to me.”

“ Did Lord Belmont see his son while at Emmerton ?”

“ I really am unable to say,” said Dalling ; “ I left home somewhat unexpectedly.”

“ Doctor Dalling,” said the Baron, warming with the subject, “ I have to apologize for what may seem at the moment an impertinence ; but is there not—forgive me, if I seem abrupt—is

there not an attachment existing between Edward Bramley and Miss Dalling ?”

“ I will be candid, Sir,” said Dalling, stricken by the earnestness of the stranger’s manner ; “ such an attachment certainly *did* exist ; but it is over—ended.”

“ Was the affection mutual, Sir ?”

“ It was,” said Dalling, smiling at the energetic manner in which the question was put ; “ and had there been an equality of circumstances, I should have rejoiced at its happier termination ; as it is, the subject is a constant source of regret to me : for I unconsciously, and I must say somewhat incautiously, suffered the perpetual intercourse of two young hearts, of two beings whose highly cultivated minds sought the same pursuits, the same recreations. Nor was it till the whole thing burst upon me in the shape of a declared attachment that I saw my error. I redeemed it, however, as speedily as possible. He quitted my house the day of its disclosure.”

“ You parted with him not in anger, then, Doctor Dalling ?” said his Lordship.

“ In anger, Sir ! His conduct throughout the whole affair has been honourable, exem-

plary;—in short, of the same quality as every other action of his life.”

“Tell me, Sir, one word more. Did not Lord Belmont insist upon his marrying Miss Dalling?”

“On the contrary, he refused his consent in terms less courteous than might have been expected; but he did not know me—he must have been deceived in *me* and in my child. I forgive him from my heart; but I lament that an attachment so devoted as that of those young people, and to which I have been an unwilling accessary, should end so ill; and which, certainly, had his Lordship condescended to know me and *mine*, he might at all events have terminated in more consistent language.”

“He did *not* know you, Doctor Dalling. He had never seen that lovely creature, your child.”

“She *might* have softened his Lordship,” said her father. “In personal attraction many are her equals; but in virtue, excellence of heart, and every attribute which can adorn the female mind, I may indeed be proud of her.”

“She must marry Bramley, Sir!” said the Baron, pushing away his glass with violence.

"Never, Sir!" said the Doctor. "His Lordship is not likely to relent; nor would I compromise my child's respectability or my own character, by listening to any proposal on his part, without a full and ample reparation for the injury he has done me."

"You know not *half* the injury he has done you," said Belmont, in a voice of thunder.

"Indeed!"

"He was taught to fancy you at once proud, mean, vulgar, and illiterate; he was made to believe that, that pure, lovely, and excellent girl, your daughter, had fallen a prey to the arts of his son, and he left Emmerton commanding that son to marry the *victim of his baseness*."

"Sir!" said Dalling, starting from his seat, "do you mean to insult me—to outrage me? I claim the protection of Sir Thomas Farnbridge. I am precluded—"

"Claim what you will, Sir," interrupted Harvey, bursting into a flood of tears, "you have a right to every thing at my hands. I have been deceived; grossly, basely outraged myself. Ford! Ford! Ford! is the villain here! It is

he who has marred our happiness : but Heaven will give the victory to virtue."

" *You, Sir !*" said Dalling. " Whom, then, am I speaking to?"

" To one who supplicates your pardon, Sir ; to one who acknowledges your worth ;—to the father of Edward Bramley, Sir."

" My Lord !" said Dalling, starting back.

" Yes, Doctor," cried Sir Thomas, " the murder's out. This is my old friend Belmont ; pray know him."

" I must entreat forgiveness first," said his Lordship. " I am proud, Doctor Dalling,—I am passionate—my feelings are strong—I have wronged you under the guidance of a villain—of Ford. What his object has been, must be a matter for hereafter ; but when I solicit your pardon for whatever grossness of conduct I may have been guilty of towards you, I trust you will not refuse me *your* hand as a pledge for her's, an alliance with whom would do honour to a throne."

Dalling was overcome : tears flowed from his eyes, and his hand was grasped in that of Lord Belmont in a second.—To pursue this conversation farther would be useless, even

were it possible; but the truth is, that hardly had the parties subsided into something like rationality, and Dalling given a full and true account of Edward's character, before the butler announced that coffee was ready in the drawing-room, and the carriages at the door for the ball.

At first it was intended to disclose the whole story to Rose, but her father knowing the delicacy of her constitution, the sensitiveness of her feelings, and the enthusiasm of her nature, was convinced that it would be better at all events to let it develope itself in the course of the evening, he undertaking by degrees to prepare her for the favourable turn which the most important affair of her short life had taken. Accordingly it was agreed that Lord Belmont should not accompany them to the ball, but should follow with Sir Thomas, the young ladies being to be *chaperoned* by Mrs. Frankland, Sir Thomas's sister.

A servant was despatched for his Lordship's carriage, and for his man and his clothes, his Lordship having determined to appear before his intended daughter-in-law in the insignia of that honourable and military order of which he was a Civil Grand Cross, together with the

decorations of S^t. A. and S^t. P., a scheme not the least disagreeable to his Lordship, who was quite of the opinion of a much greater man than himself, (now no more,) who thought Stars and Crosses of no use if men did not wear them when they had them.

The first detachment of the ball party having taken their departure, and having picked up Mrs. Frankland at her cottage midway between Heathfield and Taunton, reached the Town Hall considerably before the elders had prepared for the gaiety, and Rose found herself not a little annoyed by being immediately surrounded by the Humbugs, all of whom were apparently ready to jump down her throat. The first intelligence she heard was that *Pa* had dined with Mr. Bramley ; that he believed he was gone mad, and had a keeper with him. The next satisfaction she received was from the unceasing enquiries of the two younger girls as to the state of the affair, and a sly recurrence to the last time they had the pleasure of seeing her—the recollection of *how* they had the pleasure of seeing her employed, was full in her mind, and bitterly did she repent having

suffered herself to be betrayed into their society.

Jack Humbug was playing billiards at the top of the house, losing his money and his temper, venting his maledictions on the crooked queues, false levels, rough cloth, and waving floor, all of which he declared were brought by circumstances to aid his adversary, who without suffering from any of the inconveniences, which if they had existed must have been in common, continued to cannonade and hazardize fourteen love, and twenty-three, six—to the end of the chapter, and till “tea,” blessed beverage! was announced in the refreshment-room.

After suffering the purgatorial society of the young ladies for some time, Rose contrived to join her father, whose countenance beamed with a pleasurable anxiety unlike in its expression what she had been accustomed of late to see; his manner was hurried and strange, he was desirous of communicating his favourable intelligence, and yet afraid of *a scene* consequent upon a full disclosure of events.

Dalling, indeed, would have given the world to have remained away from the ball, and have

passed the evening with his child and her future father-in-law; but he saw by *sounding*, that such a proposal would break up the whole party, and entail a disappointment upon the young ladies, who were inveterate dancers, and devoted to gaiety whenever it assailed them, even in the shape of a Taunton assembly.

The considerate father, however, threw out various hints to Rose, mentioned his intention of returning to Emmerton, a probability of seeing Edward, his decided abandonment of their Welsh trip; which, as she did not dance, he threw in with considerable success, and with sufficient effect to induce her to press him to tell her what had happened to change his mind, what had given him so bright a view of the same subjects which the day before he had regarded so gloomily.

“ You may hope for the best, my dear child, you shall yet, please God, be happy !” were the last words he uttered, with a squeeze of the hand, when the squeeze to tea broke off the conversation, and in an instant the Humbug girls seized upon Rose, forced her into their party, and carried her off into the refreshment-room.

With her spirits raised, and her heart lighter

than usual of late, Rose, while sitting enjoying the perilous pleasure of hot-water and milk, observed in conversation with Lady Honoria at a distant table her new friend Mr. Harvey, who, much to her surprise, appeared glittering in all the splendid fruits of long diplomacy, presenting to her astonished and unbelieving eyes a galaxy of brightness quite inexplicable.

“Has Lady Honoria known Mr. Harvey long?” said Rose to Jack Humbug, who was making the amiable and affecting to pour out the tea.

“Harvey! never knew but one Harvey in my life,” said Jack, “that was the man who made the fish-sauce, and kept the Black Dog at Bedford: used to drive four-in-hand there twice a-week to eat mutton-chops and drink soda-water, all in coats, with Horns and Hats—quite in proper form.”

“Not know Mr. Harvey? why I saw you speaking to him just now,” said Rose.

“Not conscious, ’pon my life, Miss Dalling.”

“I wanted to know where he got all those orders and ribands.”

“Orders! ribands! I see no order or riband, except Belmont’s favourite star, which

has never been off his coat since his late Majesty bestowed it on him. On the Continent we used to call it his perpetual blister."

"Whose star?" said Rose.

"Lord Belmont's; your friend Bramley's father."

"That!" said she, hesitating; "that is Mr. Harvey, I dined with him at Sir Thomas Farnbridge's to-day."

"Oh, yes," said Emma Farnbridge, "an old friend of Pa's."

"That he is an old friend of Pa's," said Humbug, "my dear Miss Farnbridge, I can easily conceive, for they have been friends for ages; but that, that is Lord Belmont is most certain."

Miss Farnbridge looked at her sister, the expression of her countenance implying that Humbug was, as usual, *wrong*; but Rose, who had been prepared for some event, who had observed and commented upon her father's unusual manner, saw more in all this than a mere common-place blunder of her communicant's. She even thought she perceived a resemblance in the Peer to his son, which had not previously struck her, nor would she perhaps have

been stricken with it then, had she not been preconvinced of their relationship. She now beheld a family likeness, at all events, stronger than that, which the old lady Ligonier discovered between the master of a family and his coal-skuttle; and when in a few minutes afterwards her father brought up the noble lord and introduced him to her in his proper character, she was prepared for the event, and not surprised. Had she been a *novel* heroine she would have mentally ejaculated "Good heavens," have thrown her eyes into a corner of the room, and immediately have sunk lifeless at his feet; but she was a mere creature of this world, and instantaneously settling in her own mind that their meeting him at Heathfield under an assumed name had been, exactly as it was, a thing previously arranged between his Lordship and Sir Thomas, she considered his subsequent introduction to her as a proof of the nobleman's relaxation from severity, and of a change in his opinion respecting them, and received him, certainly not without considerable agitation, but with not more than sufficient emotion to lighten up her bewitching countenance, and fix the representative of

sovereignty at her side for the rest of the evening.

When the Misses Farnbridge heard the *dénouement* of the mystery, their little tuckers began to heave and plait and unplait themselves. He was a Peer, he was a Baron, a Grand Cross of the Bath, and he was—still more important fact for Misses immured in the apple-clustering shades of Somersetshire—a widower. His Lordship, much too keen an observer of human nature to lose the effect this *eclaircissement* had produced upon the sisters, with all the grace of which he was master, immediately apologized in the most *humble* manner for the imposition he had ventured to practise upon the party at Heathfield; from the necessity of replying to which the young ladies were fortunately relieved by the arrival of their father, who at once ended their difficulties and their *hopes* by explaining to them *why* the artifice had been carried on, and calling upon them to rejoice at the happy result of his diplomatic ingenuity.

All eyes were now turned upon Rose Dalling, to whom, as if to compensate for his former

neglect and misconduct, his Lordship remained during the whole evening devotedly attentive. The noble lord was, in truth, perfectly captivated, and in his conversations so seldom alluded to his son, that a casual observer of his actions, or listener to his words, might have been mistaken in the object of his solicitude, and set him down rather as a principal than a *negotiator*; at all events, so ardently and earnestly did he strive to be agreeable, that Rose actually regretted the announcement of the carriage, and the signal from the Master of the Ceremonies for the cessation of that systematic Tomfoolery in which the children of “larger growth” had been assiduously engaged from eight o’clock in the evening up to the very moment ordained for its termination.

Agreeable and astonishing as the sudden change in all her prospects was, Rose did not feel its full force till she found herself again at Heathfield. Again in that house which but a little day before she had entered heart-broken and miserable, every thing around her assumed a new appearance—all was gaiety, and harmony, and joy, and when she found her-

self at liberty to talk of Edward without restraint, and to his father, she felt as if she had began a new life.

It is impossible for man to imagine the villainy and treachery of Ford, whose real character having developed itself in the arrest of young Bramley, can no longer be made to deceive even my reader. Judge the horror and indignation of Dalling when he discovered from Lord Belmont, that, not content with representing *him* and his daughter in such colours as he was convinced would disgust and decide his Lordship *against* an alliance with the family at the very moment he was encouraging the son to marry Rose, and when he found that son willing to relinquish the object of his heart, and Rose decided against accepting him upon the cruel conditions of separating him eternally from his father, that he—this Ford, this “Friend of the Family”—awakened the proud feelings of the Peer into a chivalrous desperation, by telling him that his son was bound in honour to marry the girl whom *he had already seduced!*

It was by this bold, daring, and infamous calumny, that Ford extorted the command which Edward received from Lord Belmont to

link himself with *his victim*, and to “*avoid his presence ever after.*” The separation was the great object which Ford had in view : to effect *that*, he hurried away the father from his country and connexions, covered with grief and mortification ; to maintain it, he had recourse to the desperate measure of arresting the son in his progress to overtake his parent.

Upon what apparent trifles do the most important incidents of life turn ! Had not that which to human comprehension seemed an accident, taken Lord Belmont to Heathfield, the machinations of this human fiend would have been eminently successful, and wretchedness entailed upon innocence and virtue ; but the great Disposer of events heard the prayers of his sorrowing servants, and rescued them from the snares which the wicked had laid for them.

Ignorant as Lord Belmont yet was of the measures Ford had actually taken against his son, he resolved upon returning with the Dalings to Emmerton in the morning, and there bringing to account this faithless dependent, who, from some motive yet undiscovered, had betrayed his trust, and played the villain with

him to whom he owed his fortune, and with those for whom he had repeatedly and perpetually expressed the fondest and the warmest affection.

Vain would be an attempt to describe the various emotions of the principal performers in the scene which we are contemplating, when they retired to their several apartments for the night. The only two persons who were not in the slightest degree affected in any way or manner by the great passing events were the two Misses Farnbridge, girls whose intellects were placed in their heels instead of their heads, and whose whole minds ran upon dancing: they were a couple of inveterate exhibitors who went the full length of committing *waltzery*, and who, not content with sitting up all night to go through its indecent and irritating manœuvres, sat down all the morning to play over the monotonous jerkings and sinkings of the tunes to which they had exposed themselves throughout the preceding evening, in the arms of divers and sundry strange men, privileged by the toleration of such indecency in fashionable life, to pull

about young ladies of delicate feelings, refined sentiment, and liberal education.

The elasticity of the human mind is one of its most extraordinary qualities. The man who at one time is capable of resting quietly on his pillow with the management and fate of a nation in his hands, is at another distracted, harassed, and distressed, by the probable event of a horse-race. A woman, whose resolution has never failed her under the most trying circumstances, whose courage has been undaunted in the hour of peril, and who has borne misfortunes with a pious resignation, will be agitated, tortured, and tormented, by the recollection of a single word, a single look, a single action of her own, or of some one other individual; to which no human being, besides those two, would attach the smallest importance. While Rose lay revolving in her mind the change which had been so suddenly wrought in her situation,—while the noble Peer was silently arranging and modifying those preliminaries to the negotiations, which, under existing circumstances, he felt, without specifically pledging himself to any decided line of

conduct in the outset, to be absolutely necessary,—and while Dalling was returning thanks to God for the happy issue of his affairs,—Emma Farnbridge was wondering who the tall young man with the mustachios was, who came with the Edwardses, and whether he was going to be married to Fanny; and Charlotte was trying to recollect the air of the last waltz which she had danced with Lieutenant Wainwright, and calculating whether he meant any thing serious by the advances he made during the progress of the performance. She thought (as much as she could think, *pauvre danseuse*,) till she grew drowsy, and at last fell asleep to the tune of “Lord Paget.”

Morning came; and brightly beamed the sun, but brighter still the eyes of Rose Dalling. Early was she up with her father in the park at Heathfield, and never, perhaps, was heart nearer happiness than that of our dear girl—by general consent the party soon assembled, with the exception of the two young ladies, who saw “no fun” in getting up so early after a ball. The Peer was all smiles and courtesy; Sir Thomas all mirth and hilarity, and brought (as elderly gentlemen, who are jocose, will

sometimes do) a blush into Rose's cheek, by making it a point that one of his girls should be a bride's-maid on "the occasion."

Lord Belmont had a good deal of business, and of an unpleasant nature too, upon his hands. There is hardly any thing more galling, particularly to one of the *macrocephali*, than the discovery that he has been completely deceived by a person of whose intellect he has entertained a very mean opinion. The treachery of Ford, his villainy, his evident want of honour, principle, and honesty, disgusted Lord Belmont, and roused his indignation; but the thing which wounded him was the ingenuity with which his "creature" (his Lordship used, when he was kind and condescending, to call him his "good creature,") had so entirely out-manœuvred him, outwitted him, and cheated him.

No man is a good judge in his own case; and here we have the Right Honourable Baron Belmont, G.C.B., S^t.A. and S^t.P., who was once the very crack of a congress, and who before now has puzzled Metternich, astounded Talleyrand, paralyzed Nesselrode, and out-manœuvred Chateaubriand, defeated, baf-

fled, beaten, and deceived, by Mr. Amos Ford, of Emmerton, in the county of Devon, attorney-at-law. His Lordship needed no "good-natured friend" to whisper this in his ear, for never did man go to the task of discovering his own credulity with more genuine dislike and unwillingness. However, I will do him the justice to believe that some part of his uneasiness arose from the pain which the exposure of *his* guilt and treachery in whom one has trusted, and for whom one has felt an affection, cannot fail to give. To whatever cause we may attribute his Lordship's feelings, they, certes, were extremely unpleasant,—and when the journey to Emmerton commenced, the smiles which had lighted up his fine countenance, vanished, and throwing himself back in the corner of the carriage, his coat confined by its three highest buttons, leaving visible his white waistcoat and that red riband, in which his enemies declare he sleeps, with one hand in his breeches pocket and the other on his lip, he looked as wise, as grave, as dignified, as dull, and as diplomatic as—no matter who.

At Taunton his Lordship's carriage being

recognized, was suddenly, and, as that nobleman thought, most impertinently stopped. The check which it met with, roused his Lordship from a profound dream of diplomacy in which he was indulging, and upon looking out to see who had thus rashly broken the "even tenor of his way," he beheld no less a personage standing before him than the high-sheriff of the county, who, together with his family, had been attracted to, and detained in "town" by the gaiety of the preceding night. He requested and obtained a few minutes' private conversation with the Peer, who left the carriage to listen to his narrative, which was simply a detail of Ford's proceedings against Bramley, which had officially come to his knowledge, and which baffled all the noble Lord's efforts to be calm and dignified. The member for Galway, had he seen a barbarian flogging a half-starved cart-horse, could not have more earnestly or plainly expressed his feelings than did our gentle diplomatist upon this discovery of the extent of Ford's atrocity. His epithets were strong and distinct; his determinations prompt and candidly avowed; and when he had called Dalling to the congress which was

held at the corner of Hammet-street, he perfectly astonished the reverend divine by the quantity and quality of his expletives ; however, every allowance was to be made, when the heart and feelings are really interested, the plating rubs off, and Nature prevails over the rules of art and the set forms of polite society.

Rose was handed from the carriage and conveyed into the Castle inn, where she was desired to keep herself perfectly calm ; which direction for her behaviour immediately convinced her, that some agitating event was in preparation, and set her fidgeting and worrying accordingly. The triumvirate—the high-sheriff, the peer, and the priest, proceeded to the strong hold, where they found the heir of all the Belmonts reading the Pilgrim's Progress, which had been kindly lent to him by the jailor's wife.

For effect, it must be owned, the meeting was not quite so advantageous as fiction might make it. There were no groans heard, no clanking chains, no grating bolts ; our hero was very comfortably seated in an arm-chair, with his legs upon the table, in a small but neat room, culling the beauties of Bunyan very much at his ease. For however horrible a

story might be made of a youth carried off and incarcerated, torn from all he held dear, deprived of light, of liberty, of life perhaps, the simple fact is, that Bramley, who was a person of particularly good understanding, saw and felt the full force of Ford's atrocity, but, knowing his own situation in the world, and the circumstances in which he was placed (to a certain extent), very patiently waited the return of the post, which would bring him answers to all the letters he had written on the subject, perfectly assured that neither his confinement, nor his ignorance of its exact cause could last long. Therefore when he heard that three persons were waiting to be admitted to his apartment, he immediately concluded, without calculating exactly how, that his letters had reached some of the persons to whom he had written, and that they were come, as it was natural they should, to release him.

Calmly he rose from his seat to receive them ; but when he found himself suddenly pressed to the heart of his father, the philosophy, with which he was previously armed against misfortune, forsook him. The noble Lord himself was agitated, much against his usual custom, and

they remained for several seconds folded in each other's arms, without the utterance of a syllable. Judge to what Bramley woke from the dream of reconciliation with his parent, when that parent presented to him the father of his Rose.

The high-sheriff wished himself any where but where he was. He was a stranger to Bramley, and his presence was evidently irksome: he was, however, an important performer in the *business* of the scene, and no time was lost in releasing the captive, who, to the utter surprise of the whole party, was as unable to explain why he *was* a captive, as themselves.

The necessary arrangements having been made, our hero proceeded to the inn, attended by his three friends. By an *unaccountable* attraction he was drawn close to Dalling, and in an under-tone, as if doubtful whether he might do so, he enquired after Rose. "She is well and happy, thank God!" said the Doctor: which annunciation, as Edward was not *quite* in the secret, was not so perfectly satisfactory as it would otherwise have been. "Well and happy, and without me!" *mentally ejaculated* our hero; and hurried on hardly knowing whether he walked on his head or his heels.

Arrived at the inn, the party ascended the stairs, and there found, to the inexpressible delight of the fond lover, Rose Dalling, as charming, as constant, and as true as ever. Sir Thomas Farnbridge was with her. A letter had been despatched to him from the Sheriff, which did not arrive till after Lord Belmont's departure, but which immediately brought the kind-hearted Baronet into town."

"Farnbridge," said Lord Belmont, "I am delighted to find you here; every moment more and more convinces me of the shameful deceptions which have been practised on me; my gratitude can never be sufficiently strong to you for your conduct on the occasion. Edward," said his Lordship, turning to the bewildered lover, "to Sir Thomas Farnbridge you owe your escape from the misfortune and misery, which would, but for him, have too surely accrued from Ford's treachery.—To him you are indebted for the possession of one of the most exemplary, most amiable, most charming of her sex!"

"My Lord," said Edward, trembling with agitation, "what am I to understand?"

"That with her father's permission," said

the Peer, "I give you the greatest blessing mortal can bestow—a virtuous, excellent wife; and never can I better declare and ratify my intentions; than in the presence of that man to whose instrumentality my deliverance from error is owing."

Oh what a moment was this! The upraised eye of Dalling, whose lips quivered with an agitation he vainly laboured to conceal, whose thoughts were at the moment fixed on his sainted wife in Heaven, and on the consummation of those hopes for the happiness of her child, which, without a single thought of the *worldliness* of the marriage, he saw realized in her union with one so estimable, so generous, so noble, and so good; the subdued dignity of the nobleman, who raising the trembling, blushing girl from her seat, joined her hand in that of his son, imprinting upon her glowing cheek a *ratifying* kiss, which by right of precedence in the treaty he first affixed; the doubting, agitating joy of Edward, as he received the valued, the inestimable gift, and the snuffle twice hastily repeated by Sir Thomas as he rubbed his nose and mouth strongly with his honest hand, gave indications of

the varied feelings of the group too plain to be doubted.—Such incidents as these occur but once in a life.

An immediate removal to Emmerton was the next step, preceded, however, by the indispensable toil of refreshment. Luncheon was prepared, and the waiters laid all the knives and the forks, and the salt-cellars and the spoons upon the table, as mathematically and systematically as if nothing whatever had occurred in the room. So true it is, as I have before observed in this narrative, that the great work of eating and drinking must go on, and does go on, under all the varied circumstances of grief or joy, happiness or misfortune. To describe the feelings of my young friends, would require the pen of a Shakspeare or a Scott, and therefore in despair I leave them to their full enjoyment, as did, indeed, Sir Thomas and his Lordship, who retired to a distant window to converse in an under-tone, and, as they appear to have adopted it, in order not to be overheard, I cannot but consider that it would be highly improper and “vastly ungenteel” in me to repeat what they said.

Luncheons are luncheons, journeys are

journeys, and it may therefore save time to say, that early in the afternoon the whole party were safely assembled at the Rectory. Lord Belmont was little less angry than surprised, when he saw the classical elegance of arrangement, the exquisitely good taste which characterized the Doctor's dwelling. So different in every point was Dalling himself—so completely at variance with all Ford's reports were his pursuits, his manners, and his habits, that Lord Belmont could hardly contain his rage till he reached the attorney's door, at which, having thundered loudly, he prepared himself for the commencement of the campaign.

The door opened, but no Ford was there.—Mr. Ford had been out some time. "Where was he gone?" The servant did not know. "When would he be back?" The servant could not tell. "The moment he returns, Sir," said his Lordship, "send word to me at the Rectory."

His Lordship walked back to the "mansion of peace," having on his way encountered the evergreen, never-failing Jack Humbug, who, from what he had seen the preceding night, and from what he saw then, concluded that his term of residence at Burrowdale was nearly

over.—“Well, my Lord,” said Jack, “I wish you joy of your return to Emmerton. Just in the time for gaiety—races next week—I have two capital horses to enter—never won any thing, to be sure—all the fault of the riders—if Buckle had my Flyaway, he’d beat Sultan—he is a marvellous horse, and has always been second in every race he ran.”

“Faith,” said Lord Belmont, “I confess in the present disposition of my mind, I feel little interest in such amusements, for I am in search of a man with whom I am doomed to have a most unpleasant interview—Ford.”

“You must run as fast as my Flyaway then,” said Humbug, “if you are in pursuit of *him*, for he passed me on the Exeter road some half hour since, galloping one of your Lordship’s fleetest nags, as if Old Nick were at his heels.”

“There is a worse thing at his heels,” said his Lordship, “his conscience!”

“You have found him out, then?” said Jack.

“I have,” said Lord Belmont.

“Did you see his daughter to-day?”

“No.”

“She is endeavouring to atone for her father’s sins by extreme devotion, and has been

using all her influence, moral and religious, to put a stop to our plays, which begin to-night, under the sanction of Lady Honoria and the girls. She has even been preaching herself, I hear."

"Ridiculous!"

"Faith, I am on my way to call upon her at this very moment, to endeavour to persuade her to relax; for, mad as she is, she has her *party* in this little quiet place, and if she preaches away the audience, we shall have no actors."

"If you should see her, do me the favour," said his Lordship, "to say how anxious I am to see her father; and it may be advantageous in the present stage of my business with him, to let her understand that I am not prepared to commence serious hostilities against him, in order that she, who will be doubtless earlier in communication with him than any other person, may impart that impression to *him*, and thus induce him to surrender himself more readily to my power, than, conscious as he must be of his misconduct, he otherwise would do."

"Certainly, my dear Lord," said Jack, "trust to me—I never botch a thing, as your

Lordship knows, and so good morrow for the present."

Lord Belmont returned to the Rectory, and the hours flew on, but no Ford appeared. Just as the party were separating to dress for dinner, news was brought to Ford's house, that the horse which his servant had saddled, had returned without his rider to Burrowdale stables, much heated and tired. This intelligence was communicated to his Lordship, who sent to enquire if Miss Ford knew any thing of her father's movements; but it appeared that Miss Ford had not returned home from an early walk which she had taken before breakfast.

It was evident that the enemy had decamped, and the first impression was, that the father and daughter had made good their retreat together; from this supposition, however, the Rector's party were relieved about eight o'clock in the evening, by the appearance of poor Humbug at the Parsonage, who came thither to enquire if Ford was to be found, or heard of.

"Such news, my dear Miss Dalling!" said Jack, absolutely melting with heat; the brown wig having slipped up, shewing the natural grey, beneath. "You'll all be petrified!—all thun-

derstruck ! You know, at least I know that his Lordship knows, the potent opposition which Ford's daughter has set up against the players, —the poor players ; the violent outcry she and Mr. Hogsflesh have raised against them. It is true, we carried our point, the playhouse opened to-night, and there have I, and Lady Honoria and the girls, been sitting in the stage-box for an hour and a quarter, waiting in vain for the commencement of the performance, till at last a murderous wretch walked forward, and informed us, that in consequence of a most unexpected accident having happened to the manager, there could be no performance.

“ Irritated at what I was convinced was an interference on the part of the canters, I went behind the scenes to enquire the real state of the case, when the sister of the absent manager, Miss Tidmarsh, after much embarrassment, begged for a private audience with me, and confessed——what do you think ?”

“ Impossible to guess !” exclaimed the whole party.

“ That Miss Rachel Ford went off this morning with young Tidmarsh the manager, to be married !”

“ Married ! ”

“ Married ! as I live, this dear sanctified bit of ice has thawed, melted, and become the better half of one of those unhappy creatures whose souls, according to her own doctrine, have all long since been sacrificed to their levities and dissipations.”

“ But,” said Dalling, always receiving cautiously any intelligence which came from Jack, “ have you really good authority for this ? ”

“ *Litera scripta*, my dear Doctor,” said Jack, producing a note from Mr. Tidmarsh, which he had sent back to his sister from Wells in the morning, but which had not reached the theatre in time to allow a change of the performance.

“ DEAR ANNE,” ran the note, “ I was pledged not to inform a human being of the plan we have put into execution : I am this day blest with the most amiable of her sex, Miss Ford, who has given me her hand in exchange for my heart. She has sacrificed every thing for me.—I can no more at the moment. You must arrange something for to-night ; if you can contrive to play the Beaux Stratagem, leaving out Archer, I should advise that ; if

not, you had better do the two acts of the Soldier's Daughter, in which we are ready, and make up the rest with the last three acts of the School for Friends, or any other modern play which I am out of. You shall hear from Bath to-morrow.

“Yours in perfect happiness,
“RICHARD TIDMARSH.”

“So—so—” said Lord Belmont, “and this is the saint who ——”

Hardly had these words been uttered, when a letter was delivered to his Lordship, which he broke open and read :

“LORD BELMONT,

“When you receive this, I shall be beyond the reach of fate in this world ; that I have injured and wronged you, you are by this time fully aware. I have vilified, traduced, and calumniated the most exemplary of women ; I have misrepresented the best of sons ; but my object remains yet to be disclosed ; you will discover it too soon. Speculation in foreign securities tempted me to use many sums which should have been carried to your credit for

rents, and interest of funded property. I took advantage of your agitation, when we last parted, to place papers before you for your signature, which *authorized all my past misconduct*. I invented every falsehood, every calumny, to induce you to quit England, at least for a time, and thus prevent the possibility of the frustration of my schemes. I arrested your son for a debt I had forced him into, upon a bond and judgment, which he gave me without a knowledge of its nature. All this I did. I sacrificed every thing:—for what? For my child, for the daughter I loved dearer—better than my life! I bred her up to be my blessing and my comfort. I heard that you were not gone from England, through the sheriff's officers who saw you at Taunton. I then knew my destruction was inevitable, but I resolved that *she*, for whom all my exertions had been made, and all my crimes committed, should enjoy the fruits of my past iniquity. I went to her room this morning to open my heart to her, to place her in independence, and then save myself by flight:—she was gone!—absconded!—eloped!—to become the wife of a strolling player!

“ At this moment when I am breathing my last hour’s breath—when on the brink of eternity—how dreadful do I feel the equitable dispensations of a just God. I, that for the love of gain, for personal aggrandizement, for the pomps and vanities of the world which I affected to despise, but never did despise till now, have committed every crime, am visited at once from without and within;—but one sin more remains for me to commit.—I am mad!—that must be my excuse—forgive me all of ye that I have injured. In my escritoire will be found a declaration of the illegality of those papers last signed by your Lordship: seize on all I have—let the law take all I have left, in satisfaction of your just claims. I had firmly settled it upon my daughter out of your reach.—I will not even take the credit in my dying moments of taking it from her again as an act of justice towards you. No! it is revenge upon her undutifulness: seize it all, all—let that ungrateful wanton starve! But, why do I delay? I can write no more—my brain whirls round. Farewell to all, and curses ——”

Here the dreadful scrawl became illegible: the letter had been taken from the pocket of

the miserable wretch who was discovered not far from the road-side, dead, having literally blown his head to pieces with a large horse-pistol.

A silence pervaded the whole party; Rose burst into tears, greatly agitated.

“How have I been deceived in these people!” said his Lordship, “how have they led me to sin against virtue and innocence. I would have staked my existence upon the honour and honesty of the father, on the morality and purity of the daughter: this is indeed a horrible disclosure—it is a melancholy lesson; for, while it paints in all their glowing colours the dreadful punishments which await a vicious life, it sets one trembling for one’s own security;—when Ford, the mild, the pious, unassuming Ford, the FRIEND OF THE FAMILY, thus confesses himself a flagrant sinner, and consummates a life of crime by suicide,—in whom is one to trust? where is man to look for friendship or sincerity while appearances are so deceptive?”

“It is marvellous,” said Dalling.

“’Tis the way of the world,” said Humbug, “where there is the most pretension there is the least merit: I have always seen it, and

have learned to suspect those, who are 'righteous over much.'"

"But Rachel's conduct," said Rose, "how wretched will *she* be when she hears this!"

"Not she," said Dalling; "a girl who could at once abandon her avowed principles and her father's roof in such society and on such an expedition, will feel but little remorse at the sad result. I am myself thunder-struck."

"That is exactly what I say," exclaimed Humbug, affecting to look melancholy, but in truth longing to be off to disseminate the news, "there is no trusting to appearances in this world, 'ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.'"

To affect to mourn the loss of such a man as Ford, would have been the height of hypocrisy, but events so sudden and so dreadful make a powerful impression, and it was long before the Peer, attended by Doctor Dalling, could prevail upon himself to take those steps which prudence dictated, and which, indeed, the wretched victim himself had suggested.

Upon an examination of the papers, it was

discovered that he had induced Lord Belmont to put himself entirely in his power, and from all that appeared upon the face of existing documents, it seemed that nothing would have secured his Lordship from the most serious inconveniences but the defection of Rachel, who, subdued by the insinuating manners of the player, had given him to understand that with her person he would possess her fortune, and indeed had satisfied the enterprising Thespian of the importance of the gift, by a display of the documents, to which she had access in her father's house.

He too, like Jack, however, found that "ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS," and it remains a doubtful matter to me, for I have heard nothing of them since, whether the pious Rachel herself was not deceived in the *glittering* promises made by her lover of marriage, since I have reason to believe the news of her father's ruin and suicide reached the happy pair previous to the ceremony which was to bind them together eternally.

Every part of Rachel's personal property was scrupulously selected from the wreck of

Ford's fortunes, and upon an application from her swain, made through his sister, transmitted to her; indeed, I believe, his Lordship behaved most liberally upon the occasion.

Perhaps it may be expected, having come to the exemplification of my proverb, that I should announce the union of our true lovers as having taken place immediately; but, no—the friends of the Duke of Basingstoke considered it necessary to extract some apology from my Lord Belmont, for the affronting neglect he had shewn to his illustrious family, by breaking off the long proposed alliance between his Lordship's son and his Grace's daughter.

Little did they know Lord Belmont, who supposed him a likely man to be driven into an apology. He disdained even an explanation in the present stage of the business, the preliminaries, as he said, having been opened in a manner dissonant from the usages of society; and after a very long correspondence, which was subsequently published in the newspapers, the parties set off for the Continent, attended by a friend and a surgeon each, to decide the existing difference between them.

The Continent was chosen, as my readers will perceive, in order to avoid the disagreeable consequences which might arise from a fatal termination to the meeting. The scene of action was a field a short distance from Calais on the Boulogne road; every precaution was taken that the proposed *rencontre* should not transpire; and Lord Belmont travelled across the country to Dover, while the Duke proceeded in his yacht from Tenby to the appointment.

His Grace was attended to the ground by the Marquis of Esher, Lord Belmont by General Ball: the seconds having in vain attempted a reconciliation upon the ground, and being quite satisfied that any farther discussion was an useless waste of time, the parties took their places: his Grace drew the trigger of his pistol which missed fire, upon which his Lordship declared in the most gallant and honourable manner, that under the circumstances he could not think of going on any farther; his Grace immediately avowed himself perfectly satisfied. They then shook hands, and returned to dinner at Dessein's, and the following morning, having crossed in

his Grace's yacht, proceeded to town together in Lord Belmont's carriage.

The honour of two illustrious houses having been thus gallantly maintained, and the personal courage of their noble representatives firmly and fully established, nothing remained but the consummation of the happiness of our hero and heroine.

Their marriage took place without the ostentation which marks every-day events of a similar nature. In the church of her own parish, by her beloved father, was the ceremony performed which gave Rose to her adoring Edward. Joy, pure and heartfelt, was with them; it was mingled with gratitude to heaven for past preservation from misery, and with those bright hopes for the future which youthful lovers, such as they, could not fail to feel.

When they stepped into the carriage after breakfast (more eating!) Dalling impressed a kiss of love upon his daughter's cheek, and pressed the hand of his new son-in-law. Lord Belmont could not speak to them, nor they to him--their hearts were too full; and as they drove from the door I said "In this silence there is that, which passeth shew--their joy is

too deep for utterance. I felt it was genuine, for, with my friend Humbug, (who with his family, lives and flourishes to illustrate his own axiom,) I always doubt the sincerity of extravagant professions, believing in the proverb which says,

“ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.”

M E R T O N.

M E R T O N.

CHAPTER I.

“O Marriage ! Marriage, what a curse is thine,
Where hands alone consent and hearts abhor !”

“SHE certainly *is* the finest girl in the room.”
—I heard a man exclaim, close behind me at Lady Castleton’s assembly.

“Upon my honour *she is*,” said his friend :
“who is she ?”—

“There,” replied the former speaker, “history has left me in the dark.”

I naturally turned to discover the object of their admiration, when I perceived that the girl they were “lecturing upon” was no other than my charming little friend Fanny Meadows, who was seated on a chaise-longue just inside Lady Castleton’s boudoir. Her mother was beside her ; and lolling over the back of the seat I

saw young Felton of Haversfield, making the amiable, with considerable zeal and animation.

I saw also, that Mrs. Meadows was turned from her daughter, listening to what, I was sure was an old story told by Sir Mammon Clare, who stood near her, his red riband flowing like a silken river across a meadow of white dimity waistcoat, and his bright star shaking splendidly at the humour of his own narrative. Fanny, however, did not appear to receive the graceful advances of Felton quite so cordially as might have been expected, considering that—in his way—he was perfect.

Felton was a thorough-bred *Dandy*—and never sure was word so profaned, so misused, or so woefully misapplied by the more ordinary judges of society than this. The uninitiated call a man a dandy who wears a stiff neckcloth, or stays, or whiskers, or anything *outré*, even if he live in the city, and be detectable in a play-house lobby, or on a great shining horse with a new saddle, in the park on a Sunday. Never was such a mistake—Felton was *really* a dandy; he lived in the best society, knew every *body* and every *thing*, could distinguish the hand of Ude, even in a risolle, would shudder if a man

took white wine after brown game, or port with cheese (after the manner of the ancients). He was the youth who at Oxford woke the dean of his college at two in the morning to shew him an ill-roasted potatoe as a slur upon the cookery of the University; he was the man who always left town when the chairmen began to eat asparagus; he was the identical person who was called the late Mr. Felton from never being in time for dinner; he was the being who only saw fish or soup upon his own table;—carriages were named after him;—he had a mixture at Fribourg's, and gave the ton in hats. In short—he was a *dandy*. But with all his grace and sensitiveness, with all his wit and vivacity, Fanny Meadows could not conceal from me—for I watched her attentively—a certain distaste which she felt for the condescension he displayed, in thus pointedly devoting himself to the daughter of a widow lady, who had neither blood nor money to recommend her to the notice of “the curious in heiresses.”

There are many proverbs extant, which might be worked out at this period of my story had I room for them, all illustrative of that perverseness which seems inevitably to hang about

matters of love, and the affairs of lovers. It so happened at the very moment to which I am now alluding, that Fanny Meadows had neither eyes to lend, nor heart to give; the sweetly-smelling, gaily-decorated Felton had a rival, and a fearful one, in Henry Merton, whose acquaintance with the fair object of his affections had been carried on with greater facility than is usually afforded to such unrecognized intimacies, from the circumstance of its having originated and been maintained in the country, where the grounds of Mrs. Meadows and those of Mr. Merton's father were contiguous to each other.

In a few moments after I first caught the glimpse of Fanny which decided my opinion of her feelings for Felton, I saw this very Merton join the group. A shock of electricity could not more suddenly, more simultaneously have affected them all. Fanny coloured, fidgeted, and seemed particularly uneasy; her mother abandoned Sir Mammon and his anecdotes in the middle of a half-finished story to turn round and draw closer to her daughter; and Felton, raising himself from the reclining posture in which so much at his ease he had

been pouring the subtle poison into the fair one's ear, swayed himself backwards and forwards on the back of the chair; to give an appearance of perfect indifference.

The banquet was just then announced, and at a moment when the timid forget their fears, the modest their bashfulness, and the reserved their decorum, in the ardour of the chase, in pursuit of the wing of ~~the~~ cold chicken, or a spoonful of thawed ice, it was not to be supposed that the fond lover could be restrained from offering his protection to Mrs. Meadows and Fanny to the supper-rooms, where, much to the satisfaction of the younger lady, and the mortification of the elder one, my hero found himself soon after seated between them, while the elegant Felton was seen consoling himself with his back against the wall in a group of men of his own standing, very near the door.

Mrs. Meadows, who was short-sighted, or, perhaps, whose sight was not quite so good as it had been, was incessant in the applications of her glass to her eye, for the purpose of discovering her intended son-in-law—*intended* as far as *she* was concerned; and had not Merton placed himself so as to divide the parent from

the child, many of the grave looks and significant shakes of the head, which the mother played off upon her innocent charge, would have been put into words, and delivered with no small degree of asperity.

From this evening, however, greatly encouraged by the evident predisposition of Mrs. Meadows in his favour, Mr. Felton became a constant visitor at the cottage in which the lady and her daughter resided; and which, from its proximity to Lord Castleton's country house, where Felton was rusticating, was a most convenient lounge for this exquisite lover.

At length that event so anxiously expected by mamma, and so heartily dreaded by her child, arrived—Felton made Fanny an offer:—he was closeted with the fond parent;—Fanny guessed the object of this secret interview, and her surmises were verified by the annunciation of the honour she had just received, from the lips of the old lady herself.

Fanny was all timidity and gentleness, but she possessed corresponding firmness and decision. The timid, silent female is the most determined where her energies are forcibly called into play; my little heroine, though

quiet, and shy in the world, could rise boldly into action, when reason dictated and sincerity demanded that she should do so. There are two monosyllables in our language, as every body knows, upon the due pronunciation of which, at proper seasons, and in proper places, depend—wealth or poverty, rank or degradation, happiness or misery; one of those two, it required some resolution on the part of Fanny to deliver firmly and without qualification, as an answer to the tender made, through her mother, of Mr. Felton's person and estates.

The kind parent proceeded, point by point, to descant on the advantages of such a match, and on the merits of such a man, till having repeated the vocabulary of all human perfection more than ten times over, she put her countenance into a shape expressive of a desire for her daughter's answer, which she awaited with a confidence closely resembling that, felt by a Premier after the King's recommendation of a bishop has accompanied the *cong   d'  lire* to a Dean and Chapter; but she was deceived in her Fanny when she expected implicit obedience upon a point which was to make her happy or miserable for life.

Boldly collecting all her fortitude, and screwing her courage to the sticking-place, her answer to the question, (which seemed put more as a matter of form than any thing else,) whether she would accept the offer, was monosyllabic, and was delivered in that short but expressive sound which may be heard from the opposition side of the House of Commons, whenever a Tory proposes any thing useful or advantageous to the country.

Mamma, however, did not receive this brief resolve with the beautiful philosophy she had so often preached, but, bursting into something closely resembling a violent passion, exclaimed—

“No?—not accept Mr. Felton!—why, child, what on earth do you mean?—has not he a fortune—estates—property?—is not his cousin a Countess?—is not his own blood aristocratic?—will you not have an establishment—an introduction into the best society? But I know what it is, you have some other attachment, you unnatural monster—you have.”

Hard words, Mrs. Meadows, but not hard enough to shake the determination of Fanny,

who merely, by way of rejoinder, to her first refusal added,—“ I have said, Madam.” After hearing which, her mother, with something gracefully worded, (which in plain English would have sounded mightily like a curse,) upon the tip of her delicate tongue, bounced out of the room to pronounce the fatal sentence upon him, whose cause she had so strenuously advocated.

Poor Fanny’s heart fluttered rapidly after this bold expression of her feelings; she trembled at the passion she saw she had excited in her mother; the very recollection of her firmness in opposition to a parent overcame her, and, throwing herself upon a sofa, she burst into a flood of tears.

She had now taken the step which marked her partiality for Merton, and by the one decision secured herself from the irksome attentions of his rival, to which she had hitherto been incessantly exposed. Upon a re-consideration of her conduct, she felt no reason to disapprove of it; her brow resumed its usual placidity, and the smile of contentment glowed in her countenance, her palpitating bosom re-

covered its tranquillity, and her trembling limbs their steadiness, long before the first bell summoned her to dress for dinner.

Those who have been accustomed to sit down to frowns and angry words, mixed with soup and fish, will perhaps easily believe that a *tête-à-tête* dinner between the mother and daughter, "served up," so soon after the favoured lover had been "taken away," was any thing but agreeable: the silence was awful, and moreover much like the calm which precedes the storm; for no sooner had the servants withdrawn, than Mrs. Meadows relapsing from taciturnity into her usual volubility, started the agreeable topics of filial disobedience, maternal sorrows, the ingratitude of children, the folly of girls, and the merits of young Felton of Haversfield; in which she indulged for a considerable time, and wound up her discourse by preaching patience in a passion, and endeavouring to scold her daughter into a lesson of meekness and forbearance.

Blind, stone-blind are mortals to their own follies, vices, and imperfections! Will it be believed by those who do not know her, that this very Mrs. Meadows, who was arraigning her

child's conduct for refusing a perpetuity of misery, had, twenty-one years before, married Harry Meadows, an officer in the guards, without sixpence upon the face of the earth, in direct opposition to the injunction of her father, merely because *she loved him!*

Perhaps my reader may imagine, from what I have said of this lady's views and ideas touching a suitable husband for Fanny, that she was descended from a line of kings, or perhaps peers, whose blood, only a little adulterated, still flowed in her veins; but such is not the case: the gay, elegant Mrs. Meadows, so full of airs and pretensions, was the daughter of a riband-merchant resident in one of those streets leading from Cheapside, which are so narrow as to render it impossible, when a man is in them, to say on which side of the way he is walking; where, in the peas-soup atmosphere of the city, and in a wainscoted drawing-room decorated with little prints, and *silhouettes* of the whole family hung pyramidically in all the gloom of London filth, she had spent the first eight or nine years of her life; her ideas of gaiety bounded by a treat to one of the play-houses in a hackney-coach, and her notions of

life, limited by the sunken wall of Kensington-gardens, to which place, "*of a Sunday*," the family were wont to betake themselves, after an early regale of roasted beef and potatoes, in order to mingle in the gaieties of a fashionable morning.

Little Miss Bowditch—that was her name—lost her mother,—and having been placed at a boarding-school at Upper Clapton, remained improving her mind, till the bloom of fifteen glowed on her cheek, and her gracefully-formed figure proclaimed the age of womanhood at hand.

At seventeen, an acquaintance of her father's who had grown rich in the button line, and had taken a house in Harley-street, or Baker-street, (I now forget which) invited the young beauty to pass the vacation with his daughters, and so pleased was Miss Bowditch with the clear air and clean pavements of this half-modish neighbourhood, that her disinclination to return home, grew with her growth and strengthened with her strength.

At this house, amongst other charms which it possessed, she was in the habit of seeing young Harry Meadows, at that time an ensign

in the guards, elegant, graceful, gay, and pennyless; he was, from the absence of any apparent parents, generally supposed to be the natural son of a nobleman then dead; and unrestrained and unrestricted by any of the ordinary ties or considerations of life, he fell as desperately in love with our young lady as she felt it essential to her happiness to avow herself in love with him.

The gallant ensign applied in form to the riband-merchant, who ridiculed the supposition that he would allow his daughter to marry a man whose gold was all on the outer side of his pocket; and with respect to the girl, he told her that in consequence of this boldness and forwardness in suffering such an appeal to be made to him at her time of life, he should forthwith send her back to Upper Clapton, where she should remain, with all her beauties under a pinafore, till she was twenty. This threat was sufficient to fire the train which the refusal had made ready for ignition; the blooming damsel laughed at papa, and, mustering all the money she could collect, the young couple eloped, and on their return found the doors of the riband-warehouse closed against them. The old man was

resolute, disposed of his business, retired to the wilds of Hammersmith, and declared he never would see his child again.

In the mean time, although the "Home department" of the young couple was all that could be wished, the "Exchequer" was by no means flourishing; and, to increase their embarrassments and bless their loves, the little Fanny made her appearance in the world, an event shortly succeeded by her father's departure with his gallant regiment on service to the Continent, whence "never return did he."

The young widow soon began to feel the embarrassments of

"Love that dwells in an humble shed,"—

and discovered the truth of that unsentimental line of the sweet sentimental poet, which informs young folks of strong feelings and small means, that

"Lips, though blooming, must still be fed;"

and by the intercession of her friend in Harley-street, (who felt that as the mischief had accrued to her under his roof, he was bound to make a struggle and relieve her,) little Fanny, when about two years old, was taken to

her grandfather's villa on the Turnham-green road—there, her silent, playful eloquence and winning ways attracted the attention and won the affections of the old gentleman, and whilst he was fondling the infant, unconscious of his relationship to her, his daughter rushed into the room, and declared the child her own !

His resentment vanished, he received her and Fanny into his house, forgot and forgave her misconduct, and at his death bequeathed the whole of his fortune to her ; upon which she retired to the beautiful villa in which we now find her, to the total oblivion of narrow streets, smoky drawing-rooms, and the riband-shop in the city.

This was the career of Mrs. Meadows. In how far it warranted her pretensions, or authorized her tyranny over her daughter, it is not very easy to determine ; certain, however, it is, that her general conduct to Fanny as a mother was exemplary ; no care, no cost had been spared to render her every thing a young woman should be ; and if the perfection of a purpose be delight, no parent could be more amply repaid than Mrs. Meadows.

Her child was all excellence ! She was highly

and generally accomplished ; her mind was adapted to the most refined pursuits ; her heart the seat of the purest and most exalted virtues ; her innocence was innate, her modesty exquisite, and her disposition, beyond parallel, amiable.

Here, then, she was—Felton dismissed—and Harry Merton in possession of the field ; for although the daughter had been perfectly decided in the expulsion of his rival, the mother did not feel justified in excluding Merton ; indeed I have some doubts whether her conduct upon this occasion, in suffering him constantly to be in her daughter's society, had not more artifice about it than the young people themselves suspected. She saw that the perpetual intercourse of two such persons could not fail to ripen a preconceived or concealed affection ; and I suspect that she anticipated, as the fruit of their constant association, a declaration on the part of the lover which would justify her in terminating an acquaintance to which in its present state she had no plea for putting an end.

If Mrs. Meadows was manager enough to lay such a trap, Harry was quite enough of a

novice to run his head into it. He communicated his feelings and wishes on the subject of Fanny, in a letter to her mamma, to which he received an almost immediate answer extremely complimentary to his "head" and his "heart," but declining, in the most decided manner, the honour he intended her daughter, and at the same time suggesting the necessity of his abstaining from that frequency of visits to the cottage which could not fail to give her always great personal gratification, but which she felt it her duty to her child, to deny herself under the existing circumstances.

The painter's art—the poet's skill—would fail to do justice to the feelings which agitated my poor hero on the receipt of this killing letter. Exiled from the society of Fanny Meadows, while she was living within half-pistol-shot of him—excluded from the scene of all his joys, madness was in his eye, and grief in his heart; and after passing two days in a manner wholly unaccountable to his excellent and respectable father, with whom he lived, he resolved on the third evening to make one visit to the cottage, if possible to see Mrs. Meadows, and urge her by every consideration which he could summon

to his aid, to revoke the heart-breaking mandate which she had issued.

He crossed the lawn—rang the bell—its well-known sound vibrated upon his ear. He stood absolutely trembling before the door, conjuring up ten thousand phantoms: imagining orders given to the servants to refuse him admittance—thinking he heard screams of the maltreated Fanny—(mere whistlings of the wind along the verandah,) as ill-founded as all his other apprehensions; for when the door opened, the answer to his enquiry whether Mrs. Meadows was at home, was, that she was dining at Lady Castleton's—"Miss Meadows is at home, Sir," added the man.

What a world of miseries might have been saved if the hind had not been so unusually communicative. From this hour began the difficulties—the events indeed, of the lives of my hero and heroine; for although Harry felt that he ought to have denied himself the pleasure of the interview, the sacrifice was more than a gentleman of three-and-twenty, "under existing circumstances," as Mrs. Meadows phrased it, could have been expected to make.

To describe the conversation which passed between the lovers would be to violate the rule I have laid down, of holding sacred all amatory *têtes-à-têtes*; but it is necessary I should tell my readers that it came out (as the gossips say,) that Mrs. Meadows had concealed the fact of Henry's offer from her daughter; and, moreover, had endeavoured to irritate her against him, by imputing his absence from the cottage to a fickleness of disposition, or a feeling of distaste towards her.

When the placid, mild, unoffending, but determined Fanny found herself the dupe of her mother, her pride was wounded, and her astonishment at such conduct was only equalled by her sorrow for such an exposure.

"Merciful powers!" said she, "has my mother, then, deluded me? If she have descended to this artifice—if she have degraded herself by such a suppression of truth—she must, indeed, be desperate, and fixed upon my marriage with this hateful Mr. Felton."

"Then he is indeed hateful to you!" said Harry, faltering.

"Can I love two?" said Fanny, thrown off her guard by this unexpected appeal on a sub-

ject, which, as she thought, required no explanation: "I am distracted by this conduct of my mother's! I thought she would have sacrificed much for my happiness; but I dread, I tremble at my own situation! She is dining with Lady Castleton, who is Felton's cousin. She has proposed to me to make a tour immediately. I know—I see it all. I shall be forced into a marriage with him;—but can I endure it?—ought I to suffer tyranny which must destroy my happiness for ever?—How, how is it to be avoided?"

I never think of this question without wishing that the footman who opened the door to Harry that evening had been dumb. This question decided the whole thing: to be sure, had it never been asked, I should not have had the pleasure of telling my story and illustrating my proverbs! asked it was, however, and answered.—How?—There was an evident mode of avoiding the evil—a mode as clear and as broad as the great northern road.—This moment was, indeed, a critical one: she, the timid Fanny, who would have died had such a proposal been made to her a week before, listened to the suggestion of an elopement, not

without agitation, but without anger; he implored on his knees, that she would favour his prayers, save herself from wretchedness, and consent to flight. Love gave him eloquence;—he told her how cruelly she had been deceived, painted the impending dangers to her happiness in vivid colours, and argued,—too well,—that deception on *her* part was only retaliation.

She took his hand between hers, unconscious of what she did; *her* hands were as cold as ice. In the rustling of the jasmine against the casement, she thought she heard the wheels of her mother's coming carriage; she pressed his hand still closer—she was as pale as death;—she looked wildly round her, and what she muttered, though incoherent, expressed her dread of the marriage with Felton, her grief for her mother's deceptive conduct, and the terrible importance of the step she was about to take, with which she seemed fully impressed;—for *she had decided* in favour of the measure.

Another word was unnecessary. Henry saw that he had gained his point, and nothing remained but to arrange the details.—This was done—that very night was fixed upon for

flight, and Henry speedily quitted the presence of his beloved Fanny, only to return, and make her his eternally.

His head burned, his heart palpitated; he almost trembled at the responsibility which he had incurred. Fanny, half wild, participated in his agitating feelings, and hurried to her bed-room before her mother's return from Lady Castleton's. This event occurred about half-past ten. Her mother visited Fanny's chamber before she went to rest, but Fanny had engaged in the new trade of deception, and feigned sleep; her mother gazed on her, but did not speak.—If she had blessed her at *that* moment, I believe there would have been no elopement.

As soon as Fanny heard her mother dismiss her maid, she arose, and put on a morning dress, and sat herself down to wait till twelve, the appointed hour. She carefully opened her door, but, in stepping backward, she threw down two or three books which lay on her table:—all, however, was again silent.—She heard the clock which stood in the hall, ticking much louder than it ever ticked at any other time; but at length, as if to recompense her at last for its noise and tedi-

ousness, it gave to her anxious ears the long wished-for sound of midnight.

She issued carefully and slowly from her room, bearing a bundle containing a few clothes; but as she trod lightly on the stairs, they cracked and creaked, so as they never had cracked or creaked at any other time. She reached the front door—its fastenings resisted her tender hands, and just as she was drawing the last bolt—a cough from one of the men-servants who slept (or, as she then found, did *not* sleep) in a room adjoining the hall, so terrified her, that she had nearly abandoned her enterprise; but fate decided otherwise, and in five minutes she found herself handed by her expecting lover into a chaise, which was waiting on the other side of the bridge.—No sooner had they seated themselves, than it dashed off, with as much *impeius* as the power of four horses and a guinea *per* stage *per* boy could give it.

CHAPTER II.

“ Roxana clasps my monarch in her arms,
Doats on my conqu’ror, my dear Lord, my King,
Devours his lips, eats him with hungry kisses,
She grasps him all.”

FOR thirty-three hours had the incessant whirl of the chaise continued, and Fanny had not complained of fatigue, until they reached Inglewood Forest, and were flying on the wings of love towards the boundary of the land of banish and barbarism, when one of the forewheels of the carriage, tired of the monotonous way of life in which it had been so long employed, retired suddenly from the axle-tree to repose itself in a ditch by the road-side, and down came the fugitives in the middle of the open country, at nine o’clock in the morning,

one mile and a half short of Carlton, and seventeen miles short of Gretna itself.

This misfortune, however, was not of serious importance, because a chaise could easily be procured from Carlisle; and as they were quite certain of being eight or ten hours in advance of their pursuers (if they had any). Harry thought it would be a favourable opportunity for his lovely charge to rest and refresh herself with a little sleep, while the messengers were sent forward to procure the carriage.

Under these circumstances, like Adam and Eve—the wide world before them, our lovers left the wreck of the chaise, and walked forward to Carlton, and shortly reached the King's Arms, where, being pedestrians, their reception was not the most flattering, nor was it till the postboys arrived to explain the accident that any thing like a decent breakfast could be procured. The moment, however, the respectability of the party was vouched for by the evidence of the two postilions, they were forthwith removed from a little three-cornered sanded room, with a smoky chimney under the gateway, to a comfortable apart-

ment, which had all the advantages of the refinements of carpets and window-curtains.

Still there was something uncivil about the waiters and the chambermaids, and the mistress of the house, (who appeared acting as master of the concern,) and a degree of blunt carelessness, which soured Harry, who loved quickness and attention, and made it his practice always to obtain them where they were to be had; and after breakfast, when Fanny had retired to a bed-room to get a little refreshment, until the man returned with the chaise from Carlisle, he walked down the street of Carlton dissatisfied and out of sorts, and feeling nervous and uncomfortable.

He walked forward towards Haraby, and while he stopped debating whether he should cross the bridge there, two men appeared in view, dressed for the field, extremely well mounted, attended by a keeper on a poney, with dogs, guns, and all the *matériel* of sporting. What Merton's surprise was, when he found himself accosted by the nearer one of the two, may easily be imagined; but what his feelings might have been, when in the saluting

cavalier he recognized Jack Felton of Haversfield, I shall not attempt to describe.

"What on earth," said his bitter enemy in the most friendly tone, "what on earth can have brought you here? Who would have expected to find the gay and gallant Mr. Merton ruminating on the banks of the Petterill? Allow me to introduce you to my cousin George, who has often heard me speak of you."

Merton bowed, trembling as he was with agitation.

"Are you staying in this neighbourhood?" said Felton.

"For a very short time," answered our hero.

"I have been here now nearly three weeks; hav'n't I, George?"

"Thereabouts," said George.

"Are you returning, or proceeding?" said Felton.

Merton thought of a bit of generalship, and very cunningly said he was walking onwards to Carlisle; thus at once shaking off those who were moving in a contrary direction.

"We," said Felton, "are going to Carlton, where we meet my uncle, and some people he

has staying with him, and then proceed to shoot over some virgin preserves of his, down on the Wigton road; and as it is near ten, we must push on, and so adieu. Pray," said Felton in continuation, "how are the Meadows's? I suspect you are in high favour there," and he looked as if he would have been thought jocose.

"They were quite well when I saw them last," said Harry, hardly knowing what he said.

"I shall be delighted to see you over at Haversfield, Mr. Merton," added Felton, "if you can make out a visit to us: 'tis an old place, but there are a good many birds about it, and a mighty good cellar within it; so adieu once more, and pray let us see you if you can."

What was to be done? How was he to return to Carlton?

"Love's bitter foe was there,"

or would he shortly. Yet if Felton were to see Fanny? Well, what then? He could have no right, no claim to stop her—no power certainly to force her from him. Caution, however, could do no harm; discretion was the better

part of valour ; and therefore, taking council of a large and rational countryman whom he encountered, Harry made himself master of a cross-cut back to Carlton, by which he saw that he might gain his inn unobserved by the enemy.

By this newly discovered route he proceeded, therefore; slowly on his return, his object being to allow time for Felton's departure before *his* arrival ; and having sauntered on his way, his mind full of the difficulties of his situation—the possibility of the appearance of his chaise from Carlisle while Felton was at the inn, the general developement of his plans to the enemy, the suspicions his being there might excite in his rival's mind, the probability of that rival's falling in with Fanny, her consequent distress, and the still more probable annihilation of the whole enterprise—all these thoughts and probabilities revolving in his mind, already prepared for fermentation by the uncivil conduct of the people at the inn, rendered him very unfit for the conversation in which he was shortly doomed to participate with the landlady. Cautiously approaching the house, after an absence of more than an

hour and half, he proceeded to the parlour, where they had eaten their breakfast; but not seeing Miss Meadows there, he enquired if the chaise had arrived from Carlisle?

“ Can’t say; but I ’ll ask,” said the waiter.

“ Ask if the young lady has rung her bell yet?” said Merton.

“ Which young lady?”

“ The lady I left here,” replied our hero.

“ What! she wi’ blue police?”

“ Yes.”

“ Why, la! she ha’ been gone these three quarters o’ an hour.”

“ Gone!—where?”

“ Dearee me; an’ how should I kna’?” said the fellow, with an expression of stupid ignorance, far beyond the bearing of our hero.

“ How did she go, sirrah?”

“ Why, out o’ door, sure; how shou’d un go?”

“ Alone?”

“ Go alone!—why shouldn’t un—she be ould enow, sure.”

“ Scoundrel!” cried Merton, “ there’s villany—treachery here, and you are at the bottom of it!” saying which, his whole soul on

fire, he levelled a blow at the head of the unhappy clown, who measured his length on the floor ; but not a second elapsed, before springing on his legs again, he soon prepared to repay upon the aristocratic frame of his slender opponent, some of those ugly thumps, for the disposal of which gentlemen of his class and county are so admirably calculated ; the noise, however, of the first great fall had sufficiently alarmed the household, to bring the landlady and a posse of domestics into the apartment, whose appearance paralyzed the exertions of the enemy.

“ Parker,” cried the mistress of the house, “ what is the meaning of all this ? ”

“ That chap hit me a clout of the head, because I could not gi’ him no ’count o’ Miss.”

“ I’ll have no clouts here,” cried the irritated dame, whose Lucretian chastity had taken alarm at the equivocal appearance of the lovers ; “ nor will I have my house made a bear-garden. Did he strike you first, Parker ? ”

“ Yes, did he,” cried Parker, “ I’m ready to swear to’t.”

“ Then swear you shall,” said the lady—

“ here, get Waters the constable—take charge of that fine gentleman—take him up to 'Hall to Sir Martin's.—I 'll see the rights o' this.”

“ Have some pity,” said Henry, “ I'll pay—compromise—do any thing. I was irritated—I was in a passion—I see how stupidly I have acted—how improperly ; but say what I shall give the fellow, and I——”

“ Fellow !” said mine hostess, “ hoity-toity, my young man, who do you call fellow ? You are no gentleman, I'm sure, to talk in this way.—I've had people here by dozens, who rides in their own carriages, and some on 'em with four horses, and they have never called none of us honest people, fellows. If you want to pay, the justice shall settle that ; and you are a fool, Parker, if you don't let him know what's what.”

“ My dear good woman,” said Merton imploringly, “ do, for heaven's sake, tell me where the young lady is whom I left here—that is all I ask, and I'm ready to go any where, or do any thing you please.”

“ I know nothing about her, I'm sure,” cried the angry matron, “ nor never wishes to know nothing about no such stuck-up madams. She

walked off sly enough, without ‘with your leave, or by your leave;’ and if your cloaks and portmanteau hadn’t been here, she would not ha’e gone then.”

“Gone! but will she not come back?”

“How should I know,” replied the lady; “I should think as how she wouldn’t. Didn’t she go out wi’ Squire Felton?”

“Felton! has he been here?”

“Yes he has; he always do come here, and behaves himself like a gentleman, which he is.”

“Gone with him?—impossible!” exclaimed Henry; who thinking that by this time the irritation of all parties, with respect to the knock-down, might have grown somewhat cooler, ventured to recur to the absolute and imperative necessity he was under of following his dear Fanny, whose name he mentioned in his despair in a tone which excited the risibility of the surrounding hard-hearted rustics; but his hopes were vain—the landlady gave the constable the wink, and our love-sick hero was marched ‘captively’ to the Hall, an ancient and gloomy-looking house, buried in a rook-

ery, and which stood at no great distance from the scene of action.

Henry was firmly convinced, as indeed all the coinciding circumstances fully justified his being, that Fanny had fallen into the hands of Felton, of whose violence he had heard much rumour, and whose want of principle in such affairs was notorious. He cast his eyes about in every direction, in hopes of seeing his rival; and labouring under the idea that the whole plan was preconcerted—that the landlady was in Felton's interest, and that Fanny, so far from walking off, had been carried away forcibly, found himself in a small parlour at Sir Martin Sowerby's mansion.

Sir Martin was out, the culprit was of course detained till he returned; and, shortly after his arrival, he was visited in his jeopardy by Miss Sowerby, the baronet's daughter, whose philanthropy was celebrated all over the county; who, moreover, managed the magisterial business, and was known to be the secret influence behind the throne of justice, to which were owing the singular escapes of all handsome well-conducted culprits, and the furious punishment of all ill-favoured or low-lived miscreants, who

might, unluckily for themselves, fall under the jurisdiction of her papa.

Miss Sowerby condescended to enter into a conversation with the "young man," who explained to her every part of the transaction, except his immediate business in the neighbourhood, and excited her pity so strongly that she entreated him to partake of some cake and wine in the steward's room, where he was incarcerated. She sympathized with him, qualified his intemperance, and "spoke to the prosecutor" in his behalf, who felt much inclined, upon the persuasion of "Miss," to withdraw his charge; however, the awe in which he stood of his mistress, and the determined manner in which she had directed him to proceed, overcame his inclination to oblige the young lady, and the case went before the magistrate; who having at length returned home, after having drawn off his boots, put on his slippers, and seated himself in a most imposing green morocco armed-chair, opened the court in his library.

"Sir," said the constable, "may it please your Worship, this here man"——

"Gentleman, Waters, if you please," interrupted Marianne Sowerby.

“ Gentleman,—I ax pardon,” said Waters, “ is brought up here by me, for knocking down the waiter at the King’s Arms.”

“ Knocking down the King’s Arms,” said Sir Martin, who was not only as blind as Justice is represented, but as deaf as a post,—“ very good—write that down, Marianne, my love.”

“ He knocked down—what did you say? the King’s Arms?—that’s high treason! Reach me Mr. Burns’ book, Marianne.”

“ I did not say *that*, Sir; he knocked down the waiter at the King’s Arms.”

“ Oh, he knocked down the waiter at the King’s Arms?—very good.”

“ That be I, Sir,” said Parker.

“ Oh, you knocked the gentleman down at your master’s house:—all I can say is that, that is very shameful conduct indeed, and quite unbecoming a person in your line of life.”

“ No, pa’a,” said Marianne, “ the gentleman knocked down the waiter.”

“ Oh,—very good,—write it all down, my dear. Well, and which of you then is the gentleman?”

“ Dear me, pa’a, can’t you see?” said the daughter, looking somewhat archly at the culprit.

“ Very good—now what is your name, Sir?” said the baronet.

“ Why, Sir, really my name cannot be necessary to this examination,” said Henry. “ I am a stranger, and under a violent irritation of feeling, I certainly knocked this man down. I admit the fact, and am ready to compromise the matter in any way you please to suggest.”

“ Compromisè, Sir! who do you talk to, of compromising?—compromise a breach of the peace—an assault upon one of the King’s lieges. I shall commit you, Sir: you have admitted the fact—I shall commit you. Have you any bail?”

“ Not I, Sir, I am a stranger, and—

“ Very good,—then you must go to prison.”

Here Marianne whispered for some seconds in her father’s assailable ear, and explained that our hero really *was* a gentleman, and that he *had* gained favour in her eyes, and that the man was not hurt, and a variety of winning things, with which it is to be inferred he was somewhat pleased, for when the operation of whispering concluded, he said,—“ Very good—very good indeed, my dear.”—“ Here, you prisoner, and here, you Parker: if the gentle-

man gives you a couple of pounds, will you be satisfied, and drop proceedings?"

"I am quite agreeable, Sir," said Parker, charmed with the thought of disposing of his blood in small quantities, at a rate so advantageous.

"And who be to pay I?" said the constable.

"I," exclaimed Merton,—“I will pay anybody, anything, everybody, everything, so as I may be freed.”

"Very good," said Sir Martin, "take him away then, and settle the business between you.—I am sorry to hear of such things in Carlton; it is not as it used to be, but that's no fault of ours. There—there, go away all of you."

And the parties accordingly retired. But, alas! the feelings which agitated the different hearts which then were beating, were various and conflicting: Henry's glowed with delight at regaining his liberty, and ached with anxiety for Fanny's safety; the waiter exulted in his two pounds; the constable was proportionably charmed with his five shillings; the magistrate was enraptured at getting rid of the business; and his daughter smarted with a pang for

which the susceptible creature was not at a loss to find a name.

Marianne, a deep novel-reader, had passed the bloom of youth, and even the first sunshine of womanhood, immured in the deep recesses of her father's mansion. Plain almost to ugliness, and silly almost to fatuity, she was gifted with an inextinguishable love of romance and poetry ; and moreover with a set of passions as extraordinarily strong as her intellect was painfully weak. Such a man as our hero had not been seen in Sir Martin's house for ages. Sir Martin was universally unpopular, litigious, deaf, stupid, and moreover poor ; so that having no attractions himself, nor any to display by proxy, in the person of his child, his mansion had become a hermitage—his life perfect seclusion. The intrusion into such a den, of a being like Merton, was quite enough to create a sensation in every part of the establishment ; upon the romantic mind of Marianne, who had ten thousand pounds at her disposal, it had an effect melancholy to reflect upon.

The moment, however, our hero found himself at liberty, he ran as if wild, straight to the scene of all his miseries and insults, to renew

his enquiries for Fanny. His reception was none of the warmest, and the treatment which Parker got from his mistress for compromising the assault, more strongly convinced Merton that her object had been to detain him, and that she was in league with Felton.

Distracted and miserable, he enquired if the chaise was come from Carlisle; to which he received an answer in the affirmative from one of the boys who had driven it over. Of him he enquired whether he knew Mr. Felton of Haversfield, and if he had seen him since he had been in Carlton.

"Yes, Sir," said the boy, "I saw the Squire come out of the inn with a young lady and two or three gentlemen. Squire George was one on 'em, and they walked down town together, and then I believe they met old Mr. Felton's carriage. I see'd no more on 'em."

"I was right," exclaimed Henry, "I was too right: they are gone—she is carried off—and I am made wretched for ever. Where else could she have gone? Why was I deceived for a moment? Here," added he, "get you horses too—I'll follow them—I'll—"

"Be your name Merton, Sir?" said a little

boy with big blue eyes and curling flaxen hair.

“ It is. What then ? ”

“ Here be a note for you, Sir, from a lady.”

A reprieve, thought Harry : “ news of Fanny.”

He broke it open, and read with inexpressible delight these lines :—

“ Every step we take must be cautious : we are watched—keep at your inn till six ; it will then be dark, and we may meet with security. I confide in your compliance with this request ; consider what I have risked, and do not endanger my future happiness. I can come at six to the first mile-stone, out of the village. Be cautious, for if the landlady of the inn had the least suspicion of this note, we should be ruined. I have disguised my hand in case of accident ; I shall add no name—you can expect but one such correspondent.”

“ Heaven be praised, then ! ” exclaimed Henry, “ she is safe somewhere—disguised her hand—cunning rogue, she has indeed. Here, my fine fellow—here’s half-a-crown for you, and if you see the lady, you may tell her you have given me the note.”

“ Half-a-crown ! ” said the boy, as he held it in his open hand and cast a wondering glance

at the glittering coin, "Oh my!" and away he ran under the influence of a surprise which completely overcame his gratitude and good manners, and was out of sight in a moment.

It was now quite clear that Fanny had escaped from Felton, even if she had actually been in his power, and it was equally evident that a plot had been laid after Felton's arrival at the inn, where his suspicions had been excited by having seen his rival, to get possession of her: her present caution indicated the justice of Merton's first suspicions with respect to the landlady, but he felt convinced that she had now got shelter for herself in some neighbouring cottage, where his presence would spoil all, and he therefore prudently and wisely determined to obey her injunctions, keep his inn, and be particularly civil to its inhabitants, upon whom the atonement he had made to the waiter had had a due effect.

In pursuance of this resolution he laid himself down on a sofa, and fell into a sound sleep till five o'clock, at which early hour he had ordered his dinner, that he might be ready to meet his beloved girl at six, directing the Carlisle chaise and horses to be in waiting at

the end of the town at half past six, to carry them to the end of their journey and the consummation of their earthly hopes and wishes.

A broiled fowl with mushroom sauce, and a veal cutlet, smoked on the board as the clock struck five; and having eaten with an appetite excited by his present security, and having moreover satisfied his thirst with a bottle of extremely palatable claret, he found time, which lags amazingly before dinner when one is alone at an inn, move more rapidly after the repast was concluded and the beverage nearly so; and with all his anxiety and punctuality, it was only as the clock was striking six that he found himself at the appointed spot.

Sympathetic souls! how true it is that we are led instinctively, intuitively as it were, to know at a glimpse the one dear object of all our earthly affections! Harry beheld the sylph-like figure of his beloved Fanny—punctual to the appointed moment there she was; and no sooner did she see her approaching idol than she bounded forward to meet him—not a word passed—not a syllable was exchanged—conviction,—nature,—feeling,—LOVE, told him it was his own, his darling girl, and clasping the

fond creature to his heart, he did not for more than a minute discover—that he was mistaken.

No Fanny Meadows was there!—his female correspondent, his present companion, was Miss Marianne Sowerby.

What an uncommonly distressing *denouement* for both parties! Suddenly disengaging himself from the snare into which he had fallen, he bowed lowly, and begged a thousand pardons for the mistake he had committed.

“Mistake, Mr. Merton!” cried Miss Sowerby, with a voice as shrill as a peahen’s before rain, “There’s no mistake; it is I!”

“I—ma’am!—yes, ma’am, so I see; but—but—I *expect another* lady here at this very moment; and——”

“Another lady!—What other lady is there in Carlton, in Cumberland, or in Christendom, who would have made such a sacrifice?—while my aged father slumbers, have I not stolen here to meet you, and pour out the sorrows of my young heart to——?”

“Yes; but, my dear madam,” said Harry, feelingly alive to the distress of the lady, but devoutly wishing her at Old Nick, and expecting every moment the arrival of Fanny just in time

to discover them together, "yes, but—I expect—I received—that is—a note ——"

"To be sure you did, from *me*. Did I not labour to disguise the character in which it was written? Oh, what would Evelina have said!"

"Evelina, ma'am!—I don't know any thing about Evelina; but are *you* really the authoress of that note which I received, appointing a meeting here?"

"I am, sweet fellow!"

"Mercy upon us, what on earth shall I do, madam! my mind is so occupied—my time, my business so urgent—what in the world is to become of me?"

"Am I slighted, then, Sir?" exclaimed the indignant lady. "You shall repent this!"—Upon which all her love suddenly turning to hatred, she began to scream in a tone which was likely to alarm the whole neighbourhood, and again involve our hero in a dilemma somewhat more serious than that out of which he had just extricated himself. Nothing was left for it but flight; and, unconscious of any thing but speed, he took to his heels, and ran as fast as he could through the town, past the inn, to

the place where he directed the chaise to wait, and without farther consideration, leaped into the vehicle, and darted off for Carlisle.

The mud flew merrily, the wheels rattled quickly, the horses seemed to fly, and Edward, perfectly uncertain whether he was doing a wise or a foolish thing at the moment, but deeply impressed with the absolute necessity of getting out of Carlton, never calculated upon the probable results of his present proceeding till the chaise drove up to one of the inns in Carlisle, out of which immediately issued a waiter, who called to the boys—"That you, Dick!"

"Ay, ay; it's we!"

"Is the gentleman come?"

"What gentleman?" said Merton, thrusting his head out of the window.

"Mr. Merton, Sir!"

"Yes; here I am: who wants me?"

"The young lady, Sir, who has been here ever since the morning!"

Not a minute elapsed before he was out of the chaise and in the apartment, where sat, in perfect safety, though in great agitation, the object of all his hopes, his fears, and wishes.

Who can attempt to paint the delight of the lovers at this meeting? Fanny had been playing the heroine unknown to Harry; for, some time after the chaise had arrived from Carlisle to convey them to Gretna, and she had risen from her short sleep, she saw at the door of the inn, Felton and his cousin, who were shortly after joined by a third young man and a lady. This convinced her that they were going to take up their abode in the inn; and therefore, collecting from the chambermaid which way Merton had strolled when he went out, she set off to meet him on his return, and prevent his falling into the society of his rival. Merton, having cautiously avoided the high road which Fanny took, for the purpose of encountering him, missed her; and *she*, dreading a return to what she naturally thought certain detection, walked on to Carlisle, convinced in her own mind that he would have no doubt as to which way she had walked, and if he were not discovered and stopped at Carlton, that he would naturally come on in the Carlisle chaise which she knew at all events must return, but into which she could not get, without observation from the party she was so anxious to avoid.

In this dilemma she found herself when she reached Carlisle, where, with a firmness only evinced by quiet and reserved persons, she sought for and discovered the inn, which had sent a chaise-and-four to Carlton: and having got shelter at that house, waited most anxiously for the return of the carriage, fearing to take any step till that event occurred, lest she should give a clue to her enemies, or perhaps spoil some manœuvre of her beloved Harry's to deceive them.

Here however they were, within fourteen miles of the completion of their adventure; and without much hesitation, after a little pressing on the part of Harry, and a proper course of reasoning upon the impropriety of wasting the vantage-time which they had originally gained upon any possible pursuit, fresh horses were ordered, and away went our couple at full speed to the Borders.

Now, then, was Fanny really his own!—no one could part them. Cruel mothers, flattering rivals, chattering friends, all were distanced: the chase was over—the day was his own!

False delicacy (and any delicacy at such a place would be false) is exploded at Gretna. When a lady goes to Madame Maradin's, she

wants millinery ; when she goes to Love's, she is understood to want trinkets ; when she stops at Rigge's, she wants a complexion ; when she goes to Gretna — she wants a husband. That being the case, it would have been *outré* not to talk of marriage, and prepare for its celebration ; and no sooner had they reached Gretna-hall in safety, than Merton, with a sly look at Fanny, ordered supper and a parson, to be got ready immediately.

The waiter, versed in his functions, directed the cook to prepare the repast, while he went to procure the attendance of the reverend tobacconist, who, although labouring at the moment under the effects of sundry copious libations of hot punch, was considered sufficiently steady to go through that ceremony which so respectfully and satisfactorily was to make the blushing maid a happy wife.

The moment approached, the hearts of the lovers beat, the service was to commence ; the worthy pastor, the licensed dealer in tobacco, made his appearance ; but oh ! what a falling off was there in all the pomps and vanities which tickle the hearts of fashionable girls !— the crowd of carriages, the prancing steeds, the

flying favours, the ringing bells, the sparkling diamonds, and the Brussels lace!—a pillow from a bed in an adjoining room served my pretty Fanny for a hassock, and on their bended knees, before this lay-brother of the church, did our amiable couple place themselves.

The old man, at Henry's desire, read the service of the episcopal church of Scotland with decency and propriety, till he came to that question which makes the blood mount into pretty cheeks.

“Wilt thou,” said the old man, roguishly eyeing the novice, “wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband?——”

It was too late for her then to say, No; so, mustering up all her courage, as he proceeded with the question, she hesitatingly screwed up her sweet little mouth into a demure affirmative shape, and was just prepared to give her consent utterance, when the door of the apartment was suddenly burst open, and admitted to the astonished eyes of the assembled congregation, Mrs. Meadows, Dr. Snodgrass, John Felton of Haversfield, Esq. and three menials, armed and prepared for a seizure.

CHAPTER III.

‘ Are then the joys of this bless’d meeting dash’d
So soon? So soon will Fortune snatch thee from me,
And mock my vain embraces? Thus, like one
Who in a dream with mighty toil and labour
Strives to embrace some visionary form,
Just as he seems to clasp the lovely object,
It slides away, and vanishes to air:
So I, who through opposing difficulties
Have cut my tedious way to thy lov’d arms,
At length am disappointed, and but see thee
To take my last farewell. Oh slippery state
Of human pleasures fleet and volatile,
Given us, and snatch’d again in one short moment,
To mortify our hopes, and edge our sufferings.”

THE sudden dispersion of the assembly consequent upon this very disagreeable and unexpected arrival, may be better conceived than described. The mistress of the house, who was occupied in acting mother to our heroine, made her escape through the door, and the

officiating minister, terrified at the violence of Mrs. Meadows, hid himself under the suppertable, thus availing himself of the protection which the cloth invariably affords to persons of his profession.

Fanny lay senseless, with her head in the lap of old Doctor Snodgrass, an ancient friend of Mrs. Meadows, who loved Fanny as much as if she were his own, and who, though a person of most ludicrous appearance, was kind and good-hearted, greatly averse from motion, and who never, till the present occasion, when he was selected by the enraged mother as her 'squire, had been farther than Salt Hill westward of the Metropolis, or farther eastward than Epping Forest.

"Poor thing!" said the Doctor, "poor dear!—let her be quiet. Foolish dove!—poor dear!—dear me!—oh dear!"

"A pretty thing indeed, Mr. Merton, for you to have done, to bring eternal disgrace upon my family by such a step as this," said Mrs. Meadows.

"I am conscious of no dishonour, no disgrace, which can accrue to you or your daughter, Madam," said Henry; "and I must say

that the violence of your manner, and the tenour of your observations upon the event, come with an ill grace from a lady, who, when young, herself adopted a similar line of conduct."

"I judged then as a foolish girl."

"Now, then, judge as a feeling mother. Look at your daughter—see that angel overwhelmed, broken-hearted; and if you can behold such suffering innocence unmoved, your heart is harder than I think it."

"Hard-hearted!—who, let me ask, would forgive a girl for quitting her mother's roof with a stranger?"

"Stay, madam;" said Harry, for his mind was made up to the fact that Felton (whose presence at the moment irritated him more than anything else) was an accessory to this unpleasant *denouement*, "stay; call me no stranger. Under *your* sanction, with *your* concurrence, I was permitted that constant intercourse, which familiarised your daughter and myself, which gave a similarity to our tastes and feelings, and which has brought about this event."

"What, Sir! is a mother to admit no man into her house, lest her daughter should fall in love with him?—ridiculous!"

“ I say no such thing, Mrs. Meadows,” said Harry ; “ but if you will hear me out, I will tell you, that when a mother sets her child an example of deception, she must not be surprised at a retaliation. You know that you not only concealed from Fanny your express prohibition of my visits, but that when she had disdainfully refused Mr. Felton’s offer, you, by a private arrangement, suffered, nay encouraged *him* to pay his fulsome attentions to her, because *you* had determined to devote your child to him. As for Mr. Felton himself, he and I must have some further conversation upon the subject of his dishonourable interference in the affair, which is as inconsistent with his professions of this morning, as it is with the character of a gentleman.”

“ Mrs. Meadows,” said Felton, rising from his chair, “ I wish you a very good evening. I must decline offering any explanation of my conduct to a person who can commit himself by such gross and improper language.” Saying which, and casting a look of indifference, a little tinged with contempt, upon the scene and actors around him, he walked out of the

room, and shut the door, without adding a syllable.

When he had left the apartment, Fanny rallied all her energies, and throwing herself at her mother's feet, implored not only her forgiveness, but her consent to the marriage, which she had so ungraciously interrupted. Her entreaties, added to the energetic appeal of Henry, and the doleful expression of the countenance of the dear old Jonkanoo, who had been brought three hundred and sixteen miles and a half from London to witness the scene, seemed to move the obdurate parent, and render decisive measures more than ever necessary. She rang the bell, and when the waiter entered, looking as if he expected to be minus a pair of ears, she enquired significantly whether "they were ready," and after a reply in the affirmative, she took her weeping daughter by the arm, and jamming the poor girl's bonnet upon her aching head, conducted, carried, or rather dragged her to the door, (Doctor Snodgrass, who was exceedingly melancholy, and moreover bitterly hungry, bringing up the rear,) where the carriage being *en attendant*, the irritated parent,

without bestowing one word, one look upon Merton, thrust her unhappy victim into the vehicle, the door of which being smartly shut, and the words "All right!" given by the ostlers, away rolled Fanny Meadows and all Mr. Harry Merton's hopes of earthly happiness, at the rate of ten miles an hour.

When he heard the wheels in motion, and considered what they bore from him, he determined, he knew not why or wherefore, to follow them; but while doubting what mode of conveyance to adopt, he was a good deal surprised at hearing himself accosted by a man, apparently a traveller, muffled up in a military cloak, in these words.

"Harry Merton, my dear friend! and do I see you in this place? and what upon the face of the earth are you doing here?"

"Whom am I speaking to?" said Harry; "I can hardly distinguish."

"Arn't you speaking to Charles Fitzpatrick?"

"My dear Fitzpatrick, I beg you a thousand pardons; but I will explain all my difficulties in a moment: come in, pray come in."

“ And what place, now, is this ? ” said Fitzpatrick.

“ Why,” said Merton, “ a very strange place for a man to be in, without knowing it. You are at Gretna Green ! ”

“ Upon your word, now ;—how mighty droll this is ! I have been stationed with my regiment at Newry these ten months, and having got leave of absence, I accompanied my friend O’Callaghan of our’s, by Donaghadee and Port-Patrick, and he is just gone to make a visit at some man’s house in this neighbourhood, and I merely told the stage-coachman to put me down at the nearest inn to where he stopped, and so, faith, he has ; but upon the word of a gentleman, I vow to Gad it never once entered my head to ask the name of the place.”

Henry repeated his invitation to his old schoolfellow Charles, which, it is needless to say, was accepted ; and after securing beds for himself and his friend, the kind-hearted fellow cordially shaking Merton’s hand, enquired why he saw him there, and saw him so sad.

Before he could explain himself the waiter

entered, to say that the fowls were quite ready——

“Curse the fowls!” said Harry.

“Oh—tut—tut—leave that alone, my dear Harry! Why curse the fowls? I vow to Gad, upon the word of a gentleman, that I’m as hungry as a hunter; and so, Sir, if you please, produce the poultry. I’m sure,” added he, turning to Harry, “I beg ten thousand pardons for the liberty I am taking with your supper; but I know you’ll excuse me, considering that I have been inhaling the air of Dumfriesshire, and Wigtonshire, for the last twelve hours.”

Harry lost no time in excusing himself for his abruptness, and in explaining to the new arrival the delicate state of his nerves and circumstances; but scarcely had they completed the dissection of one of the fowls, before the waiter entered and delivered a card to our hero, on which was written:—

“Lieut. Col. Musgrave, from Mr. Felton.”

“Desire lights to be put in another room, and say I am coming,” said Merton. “I think,” added he to Fitzpatrick, “I am likely to require your good offices in the morning.”

“ Oh, and welcome, my dear boy ; don’t name it ! ” said Charles. And Merton, quitting the room, found in an adjoining apartment a gentleman to him unknown, who informed him how sorry he was to be employed on such an occasion, but that he was commissioned by his friend Mr. Felton of Haversfield, to request an explanation of his conduct that evening towards him ; that he could not, of course, submit to the language which Mr. Merton had used ; yet considering the irritation of the moment, he was instructed to say, that an apology would be accepted ; but he was to add, that if it did not suit Mr. Merton’s views to make this concession, he should feel obliged if Mr. Merton would name as early an hour for their meeting as might be convenient.

Merton in reply said, that fortunately, and by one of the most extraordinary chances in the world, he had a friend in the next room whom he would instantly consult, and who should arrange the necessary proceedings, if his voice was for war. In pursuance of this proposal, our hero returned to his friend, stated the circumstances, and put himself into his hands. Fitzpatrick, having shortly deliberated, attended Colonel Musgrave, and after a debate

with him, returned to Merton, and told him that it appeared to him the thing might be easily arranged, but that both he and Colonel Musgrave thought that if they were together to go to Felton, the difficulty in settling it would be greatly decreased, Fitzpatrick being resolved that no apology should be made.

According to this plan, the two negotiating powers proceeded to Felton, who was sitting over his wine, expecting a reply to his call; and what they did, or what they said in the conclave, I really do not pretend to know. Fitzpatrick returned in about half an hour, and informed Merton that all hope of pacification was over, and that he had made arrangements for a meeting at eight o'clock the following morning.

“And upon my honour,” said he, “I never saw a more free and easy impertinent person than this very Mr. John Felton of Haversfield. Stand upon no ceremony with him, Harry; he owes you no love, and don't be particular. The man just asked me who I was? Sir, says I, I'm a gentleman from the county Galway, and come of a fighting family; upon my word I have no great taste for him, and that's the truth on't.”

“ But where are we to get pistols ?” said Henry.

“ Oh ! put your heart at ease. I’ll trouble you to look here, Mr. Merton,” said he, producing from a neighbouring chair, on which they had lain previously unobserved, a case of Manton’s particular. “ Here are as sweet a pair of weapons as a man would wish to have. Look ye there, now—look ye there: that pistol killed the Earl of Whistleton, and is reckoned a beauty ; but for my own private fighting, I prefer the other.”

“ I am no judge,” said Henry ; “ and I own it is with repugnance I enter into such a contest.”

“ I vow to Gad, those are just my own sentiments,” said Fitzpatrick.

“ ‘ I never seek the battle,
Nor shun it when it comes ;’

but if people will be so unreasonable as this Mr. Felton, why one must come to this argument, which, as it is certainly the worst, ought always to be the last.”

“ Where are we to meet ?”

“ The Lord only knows what the place is

called ; as how should I know^f, unless, indeed, I were a witch? I know it when I see it, for as we were going along, I saw a stile and a sort of copse, and I said to my friend, There, says I, in case we don't make up this business, Colonel, that is a likely place for our purpose."

" Let that be understood, Sir," says he.

" With all my heart and soul, Sir," says I ; " and I could lay my hand upon it in the dark."

" Hadn't we better get to bed, Charles?" said our hero ; " I haven't had my clothes off for eight-and-forty hours."

" Oh, to bed—then to bed: I'll call you in time, never fear. Eight is the hour—sleep fast as a church, and rise steady as a rock. Bring your hand up gently, and fire low."

Henry readily took the first part of this advice, and retired to his room. It is hardly to be expected, that under the influence of so many contending feelings he should have slept ; but nature was absolutely exhausted, and although Fitzpatrick and his friend, Mr. O'Callaghan, from Newry, occupied themselves in cheerful converse, and the destruction of whiskey punch, which was exhibited in large

quantities during the evening, in the parlour immediately under our hero, he slept without the smallest interruption, till his schoolfellow Charles burst into the room, and roused him from his imperturbable slumbers.

"I'm ready," cried Merton, starting up anxiously; "is it eight?"

"Och! faith, it is, my dear friend," answered Fitzpatrick; "but you must just lie where you are, only tell me when you are likely to be in London, for I'm off—O'Callaghan and I are off like divils!"

"What! and leave me in this emergency?"

"Och! and the divil a bit of an emergency is there in the case!"

"Am I not to meet Felton?"

"Poor fellow, I hope you'll never have to meet him in this world; it will be mighty disagreeable if you do."

"I don't understand you, my dear Fitzpatrick," said Merton.

"Why, by Gad, I hardly know how to explain myself, for I have a thousand apologies to make to you for taking an affair of this nature out of your hands; but upon the word of a gentleman, I vow to Gad, this same Mr.

John Felton of Haversfield was so unnecessarily impertinent to me last night personally, that I was obliged to change my character of second into principal with him; and my friend O'Callaghan and I, had him out at seven, and I'm deuced sorry for the result, but it's what we are all born to. They've taken him home on a shutter, and I'm not a likely man, under the circumstances, to call and enquire after his health."

"In the name of Heaven, what do you mean?"

"Nothing, only that I am afraid he's as dead as Julius Cæsar. It's no fault of mine; upon the word of a gentleman, I'm quite as sorry as you can be, only those divils of Manton's have such a way of killing."

"But am I to understand——"

"You may understand that you may just stay where you are, and that I must not. We have got a chaise waiting to take us to Carlisle, they call it, I think; and then we will make the best of our way to London, where, if you'll just give me your present address, we'll meet often, I hope."

Henry gave Fitzpatrick the card he required, and, perfectly astounded with the rapidity of events, as soon as he had left his room, endeavoured, by shaking himself, to ascertain whether he were really awake, whether Felton were really shot, and in short where he really was.

Having ascertained his position in the world, and almost doubting the intelligence conveyed by his volatile friend, he arose and dressed himself, and going down stairs enquired of the waiter if he had heard any news of Mr. Felton? The answer he received was, that he had died while they were endeavouring to undress him and lay him in bed.

This seemed like a dream to Henry. The proud, the haughty inheritor of fortune, rank, and probably title; who, the night before, in the full possession of every faculty, every feeling, the sense of honour and the dread of shame, gaily carousing with his friends, had thrown the glove of defiance at the feet of his enemies, and who then stood firmly and boldly forward to vindicate his worldly reputation—who rose that very morning full of youthful vigour and the

glow of health; in the full exercise of thoughts, of feelings, of senses, of appetites, now lay extended on a stranger's bed—a corpse!

But who is there left to bewail him? Is there one?—is there one human being whose very heart-strings will crack with grief when this sad news shall reach her? Yes—alas! there is: Mary, the once innocent Mary! Of her, nothing as yet has been known to my reader,—but ruined, destroyed, by this fiend in human shape, (for such he was). Those who know *me* must yet become acquainted with *her*.

Let me pause for a moment to say what she *was*: it is necessary to the developement of my story, yet not the less painful for that.

I would not be thought to begin a set story of sorrow and seduction. I need not the aid of art or artifice to touch the feelings when I write of Mary. She was the daughter of a respectable farmer, a widower possessed of a competence beyond his wants and equal to his wishes.

After the death of his wife he had contracted his pursuits, and passed the chief part of his time at home, devoted to his child, her

education, and her future prosperity. He was an honest man, and a true; and when I say he was an example worthy of imitation by the class in which he lived, I may perhaps be excused from dilating upon his good qualities.

His daughter when first forced upon our notice was about eighteen, and amongst rural beauties bore the bell. Her eyes were of the deepest blue, shaded by long black eye-lashes; of the same colour were her eye-brows, bent like Cupid's bow to give force and power to the darts shot from beneath their arches; her figure was slight and well made; her conduct, like her father's, exemplary; her condition in every respect enviable.

The farm which old Graham inhabited was, alas! close to the ancient mansion of Haversfield, where John Felton the lady-killer annually favoured his paternal partridges by giving them the lead; and while he was thinning the breed of birds in the early part of his autumnal days, he devoted his forenoons and evenings to the society of the lovely Mary.

There is a certain pride and vanity in human nature which baffle prudence and make wis-

dom silly. You will see a father irritated against a son for extravagance and dissipation, you will find him fulminating his displeasure upon his undutiful offspring; but let the strippling shew that he has been circulating the well-stored gold in the society of his superiors, that he has been maintaining a station far above his own, the sire becomes personally flattered by the attentions shewn to his boy, and pays the bills with a degree of complacency which nothing but a touch of the *amour propre* would have induced him to liquidate. So Graham, had he consulted the forms and usages of the world—had he looked at the manners of mankind, and seen the impossibility, which must have been evident if he had, of a happy and honourable termination to it, he never would have suffered that close intimacy which with his privity was maintained between the young Squire and his daughter.

Ambition was the rock—the hidden rock he split upon, for certain it is he did not see his danger. Mary had rejected the offers of many respectable neighbours, her taste was too refined, her manners too chaste and delicate to assimilate with her equals; and in

a father's eye this very dislike of her humble associates, added to what *he* thought her perfections personal and mental, rendered her a fit companion for young Felton, who so pointedly distinguished her, and to whom she already felt a certain degree of attachment.

True it is, as Graham argued with himself, that girls much inferior to Mary in birth and accomplishments are rolling through the streets of London, graced with titles and decorated with coronets, and Love, the mighty master, can do wondrous things, but Love must have subjects blessed with certain dispositions. Felton saw, admired, and determined that Mary Graham should be his, but he determined that she never should possess his affections by that claim which alone could justify the surrender of her own.

She was conscious of her inferiority, and herself doubted the result, but Felton, whose tongue was armed with all that flattery which art makes natural, persuaded her that innocence and unsophistication were charms far beyond the trifling, glittering accomplishments of the day : that ——. What does it signify what he said ?—six words will tell the story.

“ He was false,—and she, undone !”

As the summer preceding the commencement of my narrative wore on, he who had professed to love her with a *pure* and ardent love—he, who under the mask of honest, honourable affection, had seduced the unsuspecting creature from the paths of virtue—he, on whose truth and principle she had placed all her reliance—he, who had robbed her of her quiet—of her innocence,—went far, far away from the only place where she could have any control over him. He was mixing in the gay and giddy world, in lighted ball-rooms, and in crowded parties, where he was courted, flattered, sought, where girls handsomer, cleverer, more accomplished, far more wealthy, far better born than Mary, would be anxious to obtain him as a husband—Would he not forget his poor sorrowing victim ?

Even she foresaw her danger; and when week passed after week and month succeeded month and still he neglected to redeem the pledge he had given her to write frequently, she grew thoughtful, mournful, miserable; she could not sleep, she fancied she heard his voice

in the still hour of night;—it was the storm that whistled through the trees, or the drifting rain pattering pitilessly against her chamber-casement—he was far away, and thinking not of her while she continued to call on his name.

“*Quel Rosignol che sì soave piagne,
Forse suo figli, o sua cara consorte,
Di dolcezza empie il cielo, e le campagne,
Con tante note sì pietose e scorte.*”

Still patience and hope were her supporters, for she had not the consolation which religion affords to the wretched: she had sinned, and, in her appeals to her Maker, her prayers were for forgiveness. The throes of sin and shame cut deeply through her heart:—she had loved, and was abandoned;—she had trusted, and was betrayed.—Those who have never felt the pangs arising from this double source, can ill conceive poor Mary's state of mind, when she addressed a letter to Felton, imploring his pity, recalling his protestations of affection, beseeching him to save her from disgrace and degradation, and announcing to him the certainty that concealment of their intimacy would soon become impossible.

Having written this, she deposited it near her palpitating heart, and cautiously stole down to the post-office, whence having carefully despatched it, she flew back to her father's house, to wait the return of the London post, which she did not doubt would bring her an answer, by which her doubts would be dissipated, and her reputation preserved.

But, alas! day followed day, week followed week, and not a word of comfort came there to the suffering girl. The cold winds of October blew—the golden foliage covered the ground, and Felton[†] was kneeling before the beauties of Fanny Meadows. In the still hour of night, when the neighbourhood was hushed, and all the village hinds were buried in sleep, her father discovered her dishonour! Irritated to madness, in a frenzy of rage, he thrust his only, his once-loved child forth from his house, and in the drizzling darkness spurned her from the threshold, and closed his door upon her for ever!

The reproaches—the accusations—the blow—the curse, which her father in his rage inflicted upon her, were too much; trembling, she ran, or rather flew, along the silent village:

she paused—she thought her parent had relented, and was calling her back ; but no ; *he* was obdurate, and *she* deserted ; the agitation of her feelings was too much for her—she sank on the step of a neighbouring cottage—her silken hair lay daggled in the mud, and the cold rain beat upon her downy cheek ;—she knew it not, she felt it not—poor soul, she had fainted !

Here for the present I must quit the poor suffering sinner, and apologizing for a digression most painful to my feelings, recur to our hero.

Henry, when he found that his antagonist was actually dead, and that his remaining on the spot could be of no service to any human being, resolved on proceeding southwards, and at two o'clock started, heart-broken as he was, and wretched beyond the hope of cure, in the direction of the vast metropolis, towards which he thought it prudent to direct his course ; and after travelling till the night closed in upon him, he resolved to rest at Penrith, where he arrived at about half-past six.

Here he ordered dinner, (for, as I have many

times observed in different parts of my different sketches, eating must go on,) and having swallowed it, was proceeding to read the Gentleman's Magazine for the years 1781, 1782, and 1783, which he had borrowed of the landlord, the dryness of the Essays therein contained being somewhat relieved by that soother of all sorrows, a flask of Chateau Margaut, when the sound of a pebble against his dinner-room window startled and annoyed him, (for in his present state of nerves it required but a trifle to discompose him,) and pitying the stupidity of clowns, who could not see a lighted room without foolishly throwing stones at it, he rang the bell, and desired the waiter to shut the shutters, which he had neglected before to do, draw the curtains, and keep out the cold, stir the fire, and bring another bottle of claret.

This second potation, and the three volumes before-named, produced effects rationally to be expected upon a constitution naturally jaded by continued fatigue, mental as well as bodily; and at ten o'clock, having spelled the books through, in hopes of diverting his thoughts from his own miseries, he rang his bell, or-

dered the chambermaid to conduct him to his room, and in half an hour fell into the most soothing dreams about Fanny, as remote in their conduct from the truth as possible; but he enjoyed

—— “ dans les mensonges

Les douceurs de la vérité,”

and slumbered soundly till somewhere about ten o'clock, when the aforesaid chambermaid (who appeared particularly active upon the occasion) put the following note into his hands :

“ DEAREST HENRY, Half-past 11, Night.

“ I endeavoured to attract your notice by throwing a pebble against the window of your dining-room. I saw you come into the house from your chaise : Mamma was in her bedroom, which is at the back of the house, and did not know any thing of your arrival ; we are to leave this at eight o'clock in the morning, but her treatment has become so dreadfully harsh, her language so unbearably severe, that having once committed a rash act, I feel driven to follow it up, to escape from such unmerited tyranny. I little thought to be induced to take such strong, such decided steps. If *you*

will risk a second attempt, I am prepared—I will not go to bed to-night, but remain in my room ; you can easily ascertain which it is, and a signal from you will be obeyed. Forgive what appears improper or indelicate in this scrawl, which I am afraid you cannot read ;—it is all for your sake. Do not fail at all events to let me know your decision.

“ Yours,

“ FANNY.

“ The servant who attended me will give you this, and I dare say bring an answer.”

“ What is the meaning of all this ?” cried Henry, raising himself in his bed—“ what in the name of wonder does it mean, I ask ?—tell me, woman !”

“ Woman, Sir !—I am no woman,” said the chambermaid, “ what d’ye mean by calling me a woman ? I’ve done all for the best,—the young lady gi’ed it to me to gi’e to you last night, but you were gone to bed, and was as fast asleep as a church ; so I clapped it into my pocket, and watched to hear your bell ring, that I might gi’e it you the first thing in the morning.”

“ And where is the young lady ?”

“ Lord love your heart, she ha’ been gone these two hours and more ; they went at eight, it is past ten now.”

“ Then am I a wretch indeed !” cried Merton ; “ of course you told her that you could not convey the note to me ?”

“ No, no, I wasn’t so silly as that comes to neither,” said the gorgon. “ I tould she, you had gotten it, so she be never a bit the wiser.”

“ Then may all the plagues of Egypt fall upon you, you monster ! What am I to do ?—how am I to act ? Order me a chaise—I ’ll follow them this instant—this moment—

“ Sorry to say,” said a dapper waiter who had been attracted to the door of Merton’s room by the noise, “ but we haven’t any horses at home.”

“ Are there none to be got, Sir ?”

“ I really can’t say, Sir ; there may be horses at the George.”

“ Send for four then,—I ’ll not stay a moment.”

“ It is a thing we seldom do, Sir, but”—

“ Don’t say another word,” said Henry,—dressing himself with the most perfect care—

lessness of the presence either of the waiter or the chambermaid, who stood staring and picking her nose, and wondering what could put any gentleman so much out of his way.

"Get me the bill, my good fellow," said Harry, "I'll go to the other inn, and get my own horses. Make haste, that's all I entreat."

"Certainly, Sir," said the waiter,—and turning in the passage to Martha, who followed him out and shut the door, said something which set the great creature laughing in a tone most discordant to the ears of our hero, who was down stairs long before the said bill was made out, and by his liberal disbursements made up for his former grossness of expression touching his fair handmaid.

At the other inn—the George, as he hoped, he procured horses, and setting off full speed, calculated that in the course of twelve hours he should recover the time he had lost; and away he went at the risk of the necks of the boys and the knees of the posters, rattling at the rate of ten, eleven, and twelve miles an hour till twelve o'clock at night, always keeping a sharp look-out for the well-known carriage of his Fanny's mother; and at about a quarter

of an hour before midnight he reached Ferry-bridge, the welcome doors of whose excellent inn were still open, and into whose snug parlour he was ushered by a smirking waiter, who made the usual suggestion whether he would take any supper; to which he again felt compelled to answer in the affirmative; and, renewing the only enquiry he had to make, whether an olive-green carriage with servants in dark-brown liveries had passed or stopped, partook of another solitary meal, slept soundly again, and at seven o'clock commenced another day's journey.

This he pursued with unremitting anxiety, till having wound it up, very much fatigued, at Grantham, was there happy enough to find a vastly intelligent, and, as he thought, sympathetic waiter: he therefore communicated to him his surprise that he had not yet overtaken a carriage which had left Penrith the morning before, and which he had been following at an immense rate.

"Perhaps," said the man, "it may have happened thus: I come from Brough, Sir,"—(which he added to give weight to his surmises,) "and know all those parts,—and I dare say that—"

"Well, what?" enquired Henry.

“ Why I dare to say, you ha’ been a coming the road by Appleby and Brough and so along by Ferrybridge and Doncaster, and your friends have gone t’other way, by Shap, and Kendal, and Lancaster. I’d lay my life they have,” said the fellow, looking quite pleased at his discovery.

“ Ah,” said Henry, “ I got my horses at a different inn, and do not know which road they took. Perhaps they have”—

And so they had.

CHAPTER IV.

——— “ Drunkenness makes you differ more
From your loved self, than from another man.”

WHEN Harry reached London, he went to Steevens's. The force of habit was strong upon him, and the days of his boyhood came to his mind, whenever he entered the coffee-room of that house, which before “clubs were trumps” in London, or rather when clubs were closed against half-pay officers, parsons without preferment, lawyers without briefs, and clerks without money, was a mighty fashionable place. At present, the innumerable societies where cheap chops, and brandy and water, may be had *by subscription*, under gilded cornices and Corinthian columns, have robbed the metropo-

litan coffee-rooms of their visitors, and the men, who ten years ago were afraid to venture their slender purses into Long's or Steevens's, on account of the expense, now denounce them as vulgar places, in comparison with their "Clubs," the chief merit of many of which, to their five or six thousand members, is the cheapness of the *victuals*, and the positive interdiction of tips to the waiters. .

This was not so in *my* time—but never mind, all is for the best: "extremes meet," and most abuses cure themselves. However, at Steevens's, whom should Harry Merton encounter, as if by magic, but Charles Fitzpatrick? There he was, as large as life, eating a *fricandeau à l'oïseille*, as quietly and calmly as if Mr. John Felton had been out shooting instead of having been shot. Astonishment seized the friends—why, it is impossible for me to guess, seeing that since beards grew on their chins, both Merton and Fitzpatrick had invariably lived at Steevens's, when in London; nay, it was in that very coffee-room, after an opera, that their boyish acquaintance had been first renewed.

"Upon my word, I vow to Gad," said Fitzpatrick, "I'm delighted to see you, I've had a mighty handsome letter from old Felton about this unhappy affair, which that same Colonel sent after me, and which I got this morning. It was necessary to have some sort of ceremony. I'm sure I forget what they call it, something with a Jury, I know,—who sat upon the poor man's body, and they brought in a verdict of——but here—here is the letter. I vow to Gad, upon my honour as a gentleman, I don't clearly understand it, but read it yourself, I know it is all extremely correct, and I'm glad of it, for poor Callaghan's sake, who is gone to see his friends, and it would have broken my heart, if I had got him into any sort of bother upon my account."

Saying which, he handed over Colonel Musgrave's letter, which merely announced the decision of old Mr. Felton not to prosecute—a determination, which (very satisfactorily to Fitzpatrick) he had come to, upon the strong representations of the Colonel, touching the extraordinary degree of insolence and unnecessary intemperance the unfortunate young

man had displayed, in the discussion with that gentleman, when he merely waited upon him as the friend of Merton.

“ Nothing can be more satisfactory, or soothing under the circumstances, my dear Fitzpatrick,” said Merton, endeavouring to temporize with his feelings.

“ Oh faith,” said Charles, “ as for its being satisfactory, I was determined it should be that, if you mean the meeting; and as for the result, I’d be sorry if I didn’t lament the man; but ’twas his own seeking, and I vow to Gad, upon the honour of a gentleman, dead as he is, if he were to play me the same tricks as he did, I’d make no scruple in having him out again to-morrow morning.”

By an arrangement of dishes, the friends contrived to “ come to wine” about the same moment. And Merton found so much pleasure in telling his sorrows over a bottle of claret, and Charles Fitzpatrick enjoyed so much gratification in listening to them under similar circumstances, that they talked and drank, and drank and talked, till the conversation taking that turn, Fitzpatrick insisted on introducing Merton to his sister, a lady of beauty, ta-

lent, and accomplishment, (the wife of a Rear-admiral, absent on service,) who would be delighted to make his acquaintance, and give them some coffee.

Upon enquiring the hour, and desiring the waiter to get a hackney coach, it turned out to be past twelve, a time not well suited, as it seemed to our hero, to pay a first visit to a new female acquaintance. The plan was accordingly changed, and another bottle of claret ordered, to be followed by a *grille*.

“ ‘Faith,” said Fitzpatrick, “ I ’d be glad you knew my sister, upon the honour of a gentleman ; I vow to Gad she’s an uncommon elegant woman, there’s no nonsense—no plating, as I call it, about her. I must tell you a great joke we have against her just now : my brother-in-law, her husband—a capital fellow, a countryman of ours—’faith, he took her over to his place in county Waterford—a mighty fine place too—and when she had been living here in England for half a dozen years—and they killed a bullock to feast the tenants, and all that sort of thing—and George, that’s her husband—George said to her, ‘ Kate, my love, I ’ve ordered them to kill a bullock, and I ’ve

desired Mahony—Mahony is his own man—his manager—gone with him to sea—oh, he’s an elegant servant!—says he, ‘By the Lord we’ve killed a bullock, and I’ve desired Mahony to take your orders about it.’ ‘Kill a bullock, my life!’ says my poor innocent sister, ‘dear heart! I’m quite pleased at that; I’m so remarkably fond of giblet-soup!’

“Faith, Sir, that’s a blunder she’ll never get the better of; but never mind that: she’s a kind creature, and I tell you what you must promise me, Harry; you must breakfast with us to-morrow; I breakfast with her, and come you shall, and she’ll tell you the story of the giblet-soup herself.”

“Agreed,” said Harry, his good humour increasing, and his spirits considerably improving with the wine, “A bargain—I’m your man!”

“That’s understood:—I’ll be delighted,” said Charles, “to introduce you!”

And here entered the waiters, with covers hermetically sealed, which being removed displayed grilled and minced pheasant; bones of sorts; and all the provocatives to appetite, and all the creators of thirst which the Apician dispensary could furnish out.

In order to meet the demand of nature for liquids, champaign punch was proposed by our hero; a proof that he had already transgressed those rules which prudence formerly, and fashion and custom at present prescribe, with regard to drinking. The lamps burned dim, the waiters looked pale and sleepy; the companions felt chilly; the ticking of the clock seemed to grow louder; an occasional gape from a distant attendant, and a shout in the street, betrayed the lateness of the hour; and at half-past two Fitzpatrick proposed a plan to his tottering friend little indicative of his own steadiness.

“I tell you what,” said the free-hearted Irishman, “we were disappointed in our coffee, and I am vexed at not having introduced you to Kate; but, I vow to Gad, I know some friends of mine, *femalè ladies*, who live in Thayer-street, Manchester-square. Oh, and upon the honour of a gentleman, extremely nice, proper, elegant people;—we’ll go there, and see if they are at home.”

“Home!” stammered Harry, “why—it’s three o’clock!”

“What of that, now?” said Charles. “What’s

the clock to do with it? Wait awhile, now, and come with me:—I'll just shew you two elegant people—at least, I know where they lived last season, and they never move. Come, will you come, Harry?"

"Any where, gallant Trojan," said Merton. "Any where, all's one to me; I'm exceedingly happy—and vastly thirsty:" saying which he seized and applied to his pale and parched lips a huge jug of small-beer which some injudicious waiter had left on a side-table.

"Tut tut, man! what's that you are doing?" cried Fitzpatrick.

"When port and claret's gone and spent, "

"Then table-beer's most excellent!"

warbled out Harry, who had lost sight of every thing in the world except the two lamps in the coffee-room; but, as if to compensate for his blindness to other objects, he was fully convinced he saw four, and sometimes six of those!

"Waiter! waiter!" cried Fitzpatrick, "open the door, if you please! Come, my excellent Harry, lean upon me, and I'll take care of you

all the way:" saying which the admirable Charles fetched across to the other side of the short passage.

"Steady!" cried Harry.

"Steady she is!" answered Charles.

And in this plight, and in this trim, did these two excellent personages serpentine their road out of the coffee-room into Bond-street, and through many other streets, the names and bearings of which were as much unknown to them at the time as they are to me now, till they actually *made* Thayer-street, Manchester-square, high and dry, the breadth of their progress having been infinitely greater than its length, during the excursion.

"That's the door!" said Charles. I know the number perfectly;—that's it—so here goes!"

Lieut.-Col. Fitzpatrick thundered away at the port—no answer:—again the door

"Vastis tremit ictibus!"

"Allow *me*," said Harry. "Suffer me, my dear Charles." And Harry produced a noise with the knocker, the force and power of which

may be pretty well understood, when I state that it awakened the watchmen. :

This had the effect. The bolts within were undrawn, and a man-servant more than half-asleep, with a candle in his hand, (which was blown out in the operation) opened the door.

"What did you please to want, Sir?" was the question.

Fitzpatrick had entirely forgotten the lady's name who was his particular acquaintance.

"Your lady, Sir," said Fitzpatrick.

"Follow me ! follow me!" added the enterprising knight-errant, turning round to Merton, who was behind him on the steps.

"No sooner said than done," cried our hero ; and both the gentlemen were in the house in a moment.

The servant awoke in reality at this juncture, and calling lustily for help, the door (highly to the credit of the parish) was almost instantly surrounded by several watchmen. Fitzpatrick endeavoured then to make his way out, but was easily caught. Harry, bolder from his ignorance of the *locale*, (for Fitzpatrick had evidently mistaken the house,) and anxious to save himself from expo-

sure, made a dash up-stairs; stumbled over a step on the landing-place, and made so much noise as to induce the inmates of the drawing-room to leave their shelter and seek safety in flight. Judge what his feelings (if feeling he had, under his present circumstances,) must have been, when, as the door of the apartment opened, he found himself standing, or rather staggering before his own, his beloved, worshipped, and adored Fanny Meadows and her maid!

This was the climax of all his miseries; (at least he then thought so, poor fellow!) and without waiting for any thing more than a shriek of horror from the astonished girl, he dashed down stairs again, and was given in charge to the guardians of the night at the door.

Strange to say, this very house had been engaged furnished by Mrs. Meadows the day before, (the day of her arrival,) at the recommendation of the people at the hotel where she stopped; and still more strange to say, she was gone to a birth-day celebration ten or twelve miles from town, (to which Fanny for many reasons did not choose to accompany her,)

from which she had not returned, leaving her daughter under the care of Doctor Snodgrass, who had but just gone to bed when the uproar broke out. This accounts for the drowsy servant's having opened the door in expectation of receiving his mistress; this accounts for Fanny's having had the advantage of being up, to witness the humiliating exposure of Henry.

The watchmen, in taking charge of our hero, seemed, to the attentive ears of poor Fanny, to use unnecessary harshness and barbarity; she, poor soul, did not foresee the consequences of this affray—she did not know that her lover could successfully follow the advice proffered by the late Lord Guilford to poor John Kemble upon another occasion, “to give them a guinea and say nothing about it;” she did not know but that he might be subjected to imprisonment, transportation, or even death for his crime; and having heard much of vagrant-acts, and tread-mills, and such things, although she determined never to see him again, she resolved, if it depended on her, at all events to release him from his present embarrassment. At the risk even of her character—of her fair fame, did this innocent, kind-hearted creature rush down

stairs, and by declaring to the "civil power" (which by the way she thought uncommonly rude,) that our hero was a friend of the family, whose present misconduct arose only from inebriety, *release* him from their clutches. The exertion made—her sense of what was due to herself instantly returned, and she ordered the door to be closed upon the humiliated grateful Merton; and, after extorting a promise from the man-servant who recognised his favourite Harry, (being convinced that no promise was necessary from her own maid,) that he would not mention the circumstance, (which, by the way, had not in the slightest degree disturbed Dr. Snodgrass,) with a heart more than half-broken, she returned to the drawing-room to await her mother's arrival from her unreasonably late country visit.

What a host of reflections crowded at this moment into the unhappy girl's mind! What an escape she had experienced in her separation from the man who in four short days had so entirely forgotten her, as regardless of propriety, or even common decency, to involve himself in the most riotous and licentious excesses; yet even here the forgiving spirit of

true love, however deeply wounded, however sorely injured, whispered something very like a palliation of his conduct. Might not his sorrows have tempted him to have recourse to wine—might he not have taken more than prudence dictated, or his ordinary habits justified, to avoid reflection? It might be so, but that he should, attended by a stranger at a most unseasonable hour, force himself into her mother's house, and even into *her* presence while in a state of intoxication, seemed perfectly unaccountable. Little did poor Fanny imagine the visit was made by mistake; and least of all did she suspect the honour of his company to have been intended for *another lady*.

“ Oh! that men should put an enemy into their mouths to steal away their brains! that we should with joy, revel, pleasure, and applause, transform ourselves into beasts!”

It is astonishing! and great credit is due to the refinement of the present age, which has banished the vice of drunkenness from all civilized and well-regulated society; it has accompanied its fit companion, swearing, into exile; but still they fearfully haunt the lower and even middling classes of my countrymen;

and yet how unaccountably is the influence of the one, and the toleration of the other, maintained any where. So long as wine is pleasant to the palate, there may be, nay, there is, a certain excuse for swallowing it; but when the votary of Bacchus (as an inveterate drunkard is *classically* called) is deprived of the power of tasting, nay, when the flavour of the liquor itself has become nauseous, how or in what way is the habit to be excused? To this sad, this destructive vice, may be attributed the wreck of the most splendid talents, the degradation of the statesman, the debasement of the wit. Are there not before us crowds of examples, where every earthly qualification is marred by it? and where poverty and obscurity are the rewards of exertions weakened by its influence, which, used with sobriety and temperance, would deserve, and might receive, the meed of honour and the wreath of fame?

The madman is at times mischievous, yet in the knowledge of his calamity, we possess the power of saving him, and preventing the commission of injuries upon others; but the wisest and the best of men, heated with wine, may in the hour of intoxication commit acts

of folly or of vice, which in sober reason they would tremble even to name; in such a state the secret of a friend, the honour of a woman, may be betrayed; nay, how frequently in our courts of justice is the *frailty* of intoxication pleaded in mitigation of the crime of MURDER!

In the present case I exhibit to my reader a flagrant instance of its incalculable mischiefs. Harry Merton, full of high principle, talent, honour, generosity, and love; with a heart devoted to Fanny Meadows, without one thought beyond *her* happiness, without one wish beyond *her* comfort, by the condemning stimulus of wine had so completely committed himself, that long before her mother's return, she had again and again offered her thanks to Heaven for the providential frustration of her marriage with him—had prayed devoutly that her blind disobedience to parental authority might be forgiven, and determined positively NEVER TO SEE HIM AGAIN; a resolution, towards the firm maintenance of which, all concomitant circumstances, it must be admitted, seemed most advantageously to combine.

Henry himself, sobered by the electrical events of the last ten minutes, was wretched beyond description. He found Fitzpatrick

waiting for him at the hotel ; but that gentleman, after apologizing for the mistake he had made in conducting his friend to a wrong house, assumed an air of something like insanity when he was made to understand the full extent of the mischief arising from his practical blunder. Oaths, protestations of affection for Harry, maledictions on his own stupidity, vows to compensate for his rashness, or blindness, or folly, or whatever it might be, filled up the measure of his oratory ; and in the repetition of all his griefs and all his promises, the ill-fated Harry left him to sleep off the effects of his woe and his wine together.

In the morning the companions arose, little the worse for the adventure of the preceding evening, as far as bodily ills go. Fitzpatrick, however, was not very clear as to the mode he had adopted to escape from the testy guardians of the night ; nor was it until his servant produced a Welsh wig, and so much of a rattle as constitutes upon special occasions in Ireland a "piece of timber," from his master's coat-pocket, that a faint glimmering of past events dawned upon his mind, the leading one of which was, his having disarmed the civil

force, upset two or three of the grave body who were escorting him down Hinde-street, and made play towards Steevens's, carrying off as trophies, the insignia of office, which were discovered, as we have described, by his man in the morning.

Harry's head ached and throbbed, but his heart—like Cassio—there it was he was hurt, “ay, past all surgery.” The terms on which he was living with Mrs. Meadows precluded the possibility of an explanation; besides, he did not know that Fanny's mother was out when he made his unseasonable appearance at their residence; in short, with a brain bewildered, and a broken spirit, he accompanied Fitzpatrick to fulfil the engagement he had previously made to breakfast with his sister, to whom Fitzpatrick had early in the morning despatched his servant to announce their intentions of visiting her.

There was something so cordial, so warm, and so winning, in the manner, the reception, and appearance of Mrs. Burke, that at any other time Harry would have been delighted to make her acquaintance: under the present circumstances, with his mind alienated from

surrounding objects, and engrossed with absent persons and "foreign affairs," he heard, but understood not; saw, but delighted not: every thing he looked upon, seemed to recall the last night's mishap; the boiling of the tea-urn sounded in his ears like the watchmen's rattles; a postman's rap at the door brought to his recollection the dread summons to the Thayer-street garrison which had produced the parley; and an account which his fair hostess gave of having been the evening before with a party of friends to see "Tom 'and Jerry," (which was then in its zenith of popularity,) appeared to convey a side-winded satire upon the exploits of the preceding night.

After breakfast Harry concluded he should be free to mourn over his lost Fanny and his ruined reputation; but Fitzpatrick, who was by no means a crying philosopher, engaged him to "make a third" in a *tête-à-tête* with his sister, from which he could not with decency extricate himself, as Fitzpatrick, indeed, knew, and therefore, in order to divert his thoughts, had involved him in it.

Fitzpatrick, whose object in getting leave of absence was to effect the purchase of a regi-

mental lieutenant-colonelcy, had business at Greenwood's, and at the Horse-Guards; his sister offered him a seat in her carriage, and it was insisted upon that Harry should be included in the party; and after the occupations of the officer were ended, they were to afford Mrs. Burke the advantage of their taste in choosing some furniture for a new house she had taken somewhere in the Regent's Park.

All this was proposed and agreed to, and the party embarked in her barouche. Their road lay through Park-Lane, and as the weather was delightful for the time of year, and it was probable that Fitzpatrick would be delayed for some time at Charing-Cross, a new proposal was made on the way that he should set Merton and his sister down at the Constitution-Hill gate, take the carriage on, and meet them, after his business was over, at Whitehall; where the servants were to wait for Mrs. Burke and Harry, who were to walk slowly down through the Green Park and St. James's Park, and thus consume the time more agreeably than by sitting shut up in the barouche on so fine a morning. Nothing could be pleasanter. Mrs. Burke, anxious to afford every accommodation to her favourite brother, insisted upon his

taking the servant with the carriage, for whom, she observed, there could be no necessity whatever, with such an escort as Mr. Merton.

“ Oh, but my dear sister,—propriety—decency !” cried Charles. “ What will the world say to this *tête-à-tête* of your’s in the Park, while poor Burke and his blue bunting are blowing about in the Mediterranean ? ”

“ Upon my honour, Charles,” said Mrs. Burke, “ I ’m not in the least alarmed at what the world says, nor a bit afraid of Mr. Merton ; so just take the servant, for, upon *my* honour, go with me he shall not, and leave you like a poor fellow in a glass-coach ! I wonder what mamma would have said to see such a sight ! ”

“ I vow to Gad, Kitty, I ’m not the man to thwart you ; so shut up the door, Mr. Samuel, and good morning to you both. I ’ll be ready for you by the time you reach Whitehall.”

And so was arranged a gentlemanly drive for the Lieutenant-Colonel, and a lady-like walk for his gay and lively sister, both of which, strange to say, appeared particularly pleasant, without being particularly wrong. As the lady and Harry, in pursuance of this plan, proceeded down the park, nearly at the back of the Ranger’s garden, Mrs. Burke was describing some

excellent traits in her brother's character, and palliating in eloquent language his recent misfortune, when, in the animation of the moment, (aided by a provoking eddy of wind,) her tip-pet fell from her shoulder. Actuated by the sense of common-place civility, Harry tendered his assistance to restore it to its proper position, and having necessarily disengaged his arm from her's, and passed his hand over the back of her neck for that purpose, retaining with his right hand the arm he had been obliged to relinquish with his left, he raised his eyes at the moment and beheld approaching him within a few yards, at a turn in the walk,—Mrs. Meadows and Fanny, followed by the identical servant who had opened the door to him at three o'clock in the morning !!!

They passed him, at an increased pace, without noticing him: the servant alone did him the honour to recognize him by a touch of his hat.

“ You know those ladies ;” said Mrs. Burke.

“ I do ;” said Harry ; “ but—but——”

“ Oh, and upon my word I don't want any secrets,” replied the lady. “ There's a reason for every thing in this world ; and I'm quite sure there's a reason for your not know-

ing those people to-day. So as I was saying, poor Charles ——”

From this point, the vivacious conversation of his fair companion was unintelligible to Harry. He heard it all going on, glibly and fluently, and it might have been uncommonly entertaining : not a syllable did he “take in :” —how could it be expected that he should?

Never, sure, was man so pestered, so pursued by misfortune; as this unhappy youth : here he was again criminated by the most unequivocal of all evidence—ocular demonstration. Twice within twenty-four hours he had been thrown under the observation of Fanny in such situations, and under such circumstances, as could leave her no possibility of doubting his carelessness, his dissipation, his infidelity.

He revolved in his mind all the mishaps of the week :—the unfortunate caution which induced him to prefer the by-path to Carlton, by which manœuvre he had missed the beloved object of his hopes and wishes while she was actually in his power ;—the unhappy equivocation produced by Miss Sowerby’s *billet-doux*, which never could have been brought about had he kept the high road and met his Dulcinea. All

the *contre-temps* of his life danced in his mind ; but all gave place to the last two : the others, Fanny knew were inevitable—the consequent annihilation of their whole scheme she saw brought about, and must have exculpated Harry from any charge except that of ill-fortune—but the last two, occurring as they did, subsequently to his apparent neglect of her note, at Penrith, were enough to drive a stoic mad.

Then again of these last two, the former one was light, by comparison with this—that had occurred while he was in a state of intoxication, in which state, let it be remembered, Fanny's generosity had been extended to him ; *this* took place in the broad noon of day, when the first object which met her eyes, after her heroic conduct of the preceding night, was her devoted slave, lounging with a dashing woman, unattended by a servant, in a public walk, adjusting her dress (or, at all events, affecting to do so,) with the most perfect *non-chalance*.

There could not have been committed a more flagrant outrage upon the feelings of an innocent, fond, devoted girl, than this. Nor could there have happened an event better cal-

culated to encourage Mrs. Meadows in her expatiations upon the baseness of her daughter's pretended lover ; and to say truth, appearances were so strong against him, that Fanny herself could hardly refuse to admit with her mother, the wonderful interposition of Providence, which had snatched a disobedient child from misery and destruction.

But when Fanny recollected the conversation at the cottage,—when she recalled those scenes, which never fade from youthful minds—when she retraced the glow of animation which beamed in Henry's countenance, as he gazed upon her; the joy which lighted up every feature, when she confessed her attachment to him, all her mother's arguments melted into thin air. Love, triumphant love, ruled lord of the ascendant, and though she blamed at one moment, she palliated at another; and grave as was the nature of his offences, her anger was light in the scale, compared with her affection. Could she have believed him *really* guilty, it is true, her outraged dignity, her wounded feelings, would have bid her shut him eternally from her heart; yet she doubted—for true love is as incredulous of the mental

deformity of its object, as it is blind to its personal imperfections.

It was impossible, however, that matters should rest on their present footing; and no sooner had Merton disengaged himself from the trammels in which he was entangled, than he proceeded to Steevens's, and addressed an exculpatory note to his beloved, entreating her to suspend her judgment, till he could explain matters to her, which he gave her to understand he was unable to do by letter: thus implying a desire for an interview, in which, he flattered himself, he could obliterate the impressions made upon his charmer's mind during the last few days.

"Any man," says the proverb, "may take a horse to a pond, but fifty men cannot make him drink." Any man may write a note to a fair captive, but fifty men cannot get it conveyed to her, while she is watched and guarded, as Fanny Meadows was.

What will not love suggest! what will his votaries refuse to do when under his influence! A man personally disagreeable, but always extremely civil to Henry, was an intimate acquaintance of the Nevilles, a family with whom the Meadowses passed much of their

time in London. He was quite sure, that amongst the few privileged associates of Fanny, Lucy Neville would certainly be one. He forthwith laid a plan of applying to this extremely disagreeable man, (whom, by the way, he did not like the less for his being particularly odious to Miss Meadows,) to induce him to make interest with Miss Neville, whose opinion of him was, luckily for all parties, quite the reverse of Fanny's, to convey the communication, upon which depended his present exculpation, and his future happiness. And accordingly he proceeded to Albany, where the destined mediator lived, and, finding him at home, opened his whole heart to him; and indeed remained with him till it was quite time to dress for dinner, expatiating upon the unparalleled charms of Fanny, and the peculiar hardship of his own particular case.

Young Wilson, to whom he addressed himself, immediately undertook the mission, and augured favourably of its success, from the fortunate circumstance which favoured its execution, namely — his engagement that very evening to a party at Neville's, where, without doubt, the Meadowses would be. Elated

with joy at a gleam of something like hope, my hero put into Wilson's hands the note which was to clear up all doubts, smooth away all difficulties, and bring about the consummation of all his hopes, so devoutly to be wished. It was therefore agreed, that Wilson should call at Steevens's, on his return from the Nevilles,—“report progress,” and, perhaps, “ask leave to sit again to-morrow.”

How time ambles withal, how time gallops withal, the immortal Bard has aptly told us—surely he crept withal, with our poor watchful lover, hoping and doubting for the issue of his enterprise. Creep did I say—the word is not strong enough to express the lagging laziness with which the senseless hands of the coffee-room clock seemed to crawl round the dial. Wine, walnuts twice picked, a magazine, three newspapers—his own pocket-book, line by line thrice read—coffee, and two glasses of Curaçoa, all, all were called in to aid the hoary traveller in his progress. But with all these “appliances and means to boot,” he mended his pace no more than a post-boy for the promise of half-a-crown at the end of a twelve-mile stage.

It was much past midnight, and Harry began to think himself doomed to a Greenland evening, when the battants of the coffee-room were thrown open and presented to his longing eyes the man from whom at any other time he would have crossed the muddiest street in town to escape.

"Well, well," said my hero, "sit down. How d'y'e do?—eh!—has she got it?"

"Hush, my dear fellow," said Wilson, "moderate your raptures—the waiters will hear us. Every body else gone?"

"Oh! ages ago."

"She *has* got it—Lucy gave it to her, and has given me her answer. I pleaded for you with the mediatrix—she pleaded with your angel, for angelic she *is*," said Wilson, "and then I saw a whispering, and a turning pale, and a flushing red, and presently the two girls marched off; and I forthwith engaged Mrs. Meadows in a conversation about pictures and poets; kept her attention employed, till the return of the fair plotters, and—

"Well, well," said Harry in breathless anxiety, "what's the result? come to that."

“Why, if you’ll promise to be punctual, and will be walking in Kensington Gardens, near the Bayswater gate, and down the Evergreen walk at one o’clock to-morrow, you will meet two young ladies who shall be nameless. Perhaps my accompanying you may not be disagreeable, nor unfavourable to any communication you may destine for the private ear of Miss Meadows.”

“Upon your honour, will she come?”

“I have said.”

“And to-morrow I shall again behold—again speak to her!”

“No raptures here, my good fellow,” said Wilson. “I’ll take a glass of soda water, and retire.”

“Ten thousand thanks, my dear friend,” said Harry, shaking Wilson cordially by the hand; “I never shall be able to repay this.”

“Be ready to-morrow,” said Wilson, “and I’ll be here at twelve. I am in some degree interested in the result of our adventure, as I confess to you, that, which I do not confess to others, that Lucy Neville, though seen to vast disadvantage by the side of Fanny Meadows, has her attractions and good points; and

over and above every other amiable quality, I flatter myself she has a partiality for your humble servant. However, once more, adieu ; and ‘remember twelve.’” And away went Wilson, leaving Harry in amended spirits, full of hope, ardour, and enthusiasm.

Those who have dwelt in climates where days of sunshine succeed each other for months, where cloudless skies reflect in summer seas the brightness and gaiety of every surrounding object, and where, for a certain season, a man is secure of fair weather, will, perhaps, enter into the feelings of poor Harry, who, when called at ten in the morning, discovered that the rain was pouring in torrents from dense clouds which seemed hanging on the very chimney-tops ; the atmosphere thick and yellow—the day dark and gloomy ; no ray of sunshine beaming with the hope of amendment in the weather, which was so decidedly bad as to preclude the possibility of a walk in Kensington Gardens, or an interview with Fanny.

Wilson came at noon, but farther progress was not to be made by Harry ; his friend, however, having the *entré* at the Nevilles', determined upon calling there. Harry resolved on

walking with him to the door of the house, as if *that* could possibly be of service to him; to be sure, Fanny had passed from it into her carriage the night before, and even the sand of the desert is sanctified by the footstep of her we love; but over the threshold he dared not venture—he had no acquaintance with the family; his present intrusion would look like design, it might involve his Fanny in difficulties—it might embarrass her friend Lucy. Quitting, therefore, the arm of his friend at the corner of the street, he returned to Steevens's, where Wilson had promised to call on his way back to Albany. •

He did call, and brought with him a sealed note—not from Fanny, but from her friend: it ran thus:—

“ You must be well convinced how irksome and unpleasant any clandestine correspondence must be to myself and *my friend*; as you value our happiness, give up all farther attempts of a similar nature. We go to-morrow to the cottage, there we may perhaps meet.

“ Yours,

“ LUCY NEVILLE.”

The contents of this, which were unknown to Wilson, were something like a damper; prudence dictated the lines, and there was in fact nothing more than a proper delicacy in the effort to terminate a secret intercourse; but prudence is not allied to love, and Henry trembled and doubted, and consulted his friend, who soothed him a little by representing that it appeared to him as if fear of Mrs. Meadows, her anger, and the consequences of her resentment, if the affair were discovered, were the real cause of this sudden conclusion; but at the same time the information that they were immediately proceeding to the cottage, where opportunities of seeing them would naturally occur more frequently than in London, was a perfect compensation for any apparent abruptness in the note.

Henry, although he did not entirely admit the force of this reasoning, nor quite see why Fanny should have written by deputy, determined upon one measure, which perhaps is self-evident to my readers—it was that of proceeding homeward immediately, so as to be down at his father's before they arrived in the neigh-

bourhood, and thus prevent the suspicions which following them might naturally create.

This resolution hastily, but wisely formed, was as hastily put into execution ; a chaise was ordered, and long before his father's dinner-hour, he was beneath his paternal roof, whence he had been absent exactly one WEEK !

CHAPTER V.

-“ We'll unlock

Our safest secrets, shed upon each other

Our tenderest cares, and quite unbar those doors

Which shall be shut to all mankind besides.”

THE reception Henry met with when he arrived at home, perfectly astonished him. His father, who had no object but his son's happiness, who never had exercised a paternal sway over the honest wishes and honourable inclinations of his child, appeared hurt, wounded, and mortified, by the exploit in which he had been engaged, and particularly so by its failure; but the young man was completely overcome, when the old gentleman, after reading him a lecture upon the folly of concealing his desires and views upon this subject from a parent, in whose conduct towards his child affection and indulgence were the prominent

features, informed him, that although circumstances, over which he had no control, prevented his being as explicit as he earnestly wished to be, he felt it right to tell him, that, had he thought proper to entrust *him* with his attachment to Miss Meadows, he should have been able to make the whole matter smooth, and would most undoubtedly have obtained Mrs. Meadows's consent to the marriage; "for," added the old gentleman, "you must be sure that with the fortune alone which I appear to have at my disposal, I should not have suffered you to have lived thus long without a profession. What my prospects for you are, I am bound implicitly to conceal, nor can you be informed upon the subject till after my death. But, upon an occasion where your happiness, and I suppose, by the step she took, the happiness of an amiable girl like Miss Meadows, are concerned, I should have felt myself fully justified, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, in submitting so much of my prospects for you to Mrs. Meadows, as would, I am inclined to believe, have very materially altered her present view of the case."

"And is it too late now, Sir?" said the anxious son.

Judge what his feelings were, when the kind father, the tear standing in his eye, the flush of happiness glowing on his furrowed cheek, answered "No."—"No, my boy," said the old gentleman, "it may be arranged—it *shall be* arranged yet."

"Ten thousand thanks and blessings!" cried the enraptured Harry. "Adieu to care! adieu to sorrow!"

"Are the Meadowses returned?" enquired Mr. Merton.

"No, Sir, I believe they will be here to-morrow."

"Then to-morrow will I make my visit of ceremony, and open the negotiations," said the father.

"Oh, to-morrow—to-morrow! why are they not here to-day?" murmured the anxious son, who was so accustomed to ill luck, that he trembled at the delay; nor was his mind at all easy as to the result, or indeed the nature of the communication to be made to the family of his beloved; he was puzzled to imagine why circumstances so deeply involving his interest as those to which Mr. Merton alluded, had been so long and so carefully concealed from him, and why they should have the effect, as his

father evidently thought they would, of entirely altering the decisions and arrangements of persons almost strangers to *him*.

Whatever his surmises might have been, or however anxious he might have felt for a little light upon the subject, any hope of farther elucidation was cut short by a command from the old gentleman, not to recur at any time to what had passed that afternoon between them; he added indeed, that, however anxious he might be to be explicit, his lips were sealed, and he trusted to his son not to seek that knowledge which could be purchased only by the sacrifice of a father's honour.

An injunction couched in such terms, was of course as binding as the strongest my Lord Chancellor ever granted in his life; but, as is uniformly the case with poor human nature, the stronger and more important the father's reasons for keeping silence appeared to be, by so much the stronger and more ardent was the son's desire of enlightenment upon the subject.

Time, against whom Harry's enmity was quite marvellous, wore on the even tenour of his way. The morrow came, and with it to their villa Mrs. Meadows and her daughter;

hardly was breathing-time allowed them, before the note which Mr. Merton had penned the night before, stating his anxiety for an interview, was sent; and an answer, indicative of the lady's acquiescence in the wish, and the happiness she should feel in receiving him at eight o'clock in the evening, returned; she moreover was pleased to request that he would make his visit unaccompanied by his son, as she was anxious to spare *his* feelings and her own upon the delicate subject under discussion, in case the interview ended unsatisfactorily, which, with a turn somewhat savouring of pertness, the lady seemed seriously to apprehend.

Every thing cold, or chilling, or killing, to our hero's ardent hopes in the reply of Mrs. Meadows, was, however, soothed away by the decided tone which his father assumed. He spoke so confidently of success, and not only of success, but of the lady's anxiety for the connexion, that Harry's happiness was complete; and while the anxious son and the delighted parent sat sipping their wine, my hero felt a sensation, to him, accustomed as he always was (and certainly had been since my

reader's acquaintance with him,) to ill-luck, entirely new—Hope, half realized, filled his mind, and he saw before him the termination of all his earthly cares.

At eight o'clock the interview was to take place; it was now half-past seven, and Harry full of joy and eagerness for the event, thought, as it was quite clear to him he should be sent for to ratify the treaty, that it would be as well to refresh his appearance whilst coffee was preparing; and therefore he took the opportunity of running up stairs to his dressing-room to give a *killing* tie to his neckcloth, and an astounding *brush-up* to his hair; but while he was employed upon this interesting service, a tremendous noise, followed by a violent ringing of bells, and screams and shrieks, suddenly assailed his ears.

Whence the uproar had arisen he could not at the moment imagine, and, rushing down stairs to enquire the cause, judge his horror, his indescribable terror and surprise, at finding the beloved father he had a few minutes before left in apparently perfect health—a *lifeless corpse*!

So it was;—an apoplectic fit had seized the

old gentleman ;—in an instant the vital spark was extinct ;—he had fallen from his chair, and when his agonized son entered the room, he was lying on the floor, the servants surrounding him, chafing his temples and rubbing the palms of his hands, in hopes of recalling what they flattered themselves was merely suspended animation ;—but it was all over ; he had been thus hastily summoned away, and the wealth of worlds could not restore him.

This last appalling stroke of fate was too much for poor Harry—his misery was incredibly great ;—but when conviction of the dreadful truth, the full amount of his affliction burst upon him, madness seized him, force could not restrain him ;—he grasped the cold hand of his dead father, pressed it to his lips, called on his name a thousand times, printed a thousand kisses upon his unconscious cheek. He still dared to hope for the resuscitation of his beloved parent ; the village surgeon, who had been summoned, shortly arrived, and made an effort to open a vein, but all was fruitless ; the soul of Merton had winged its flight to Heaven.

It was by force alone Henry was removed

from the body ; he knew, he felt what he had lost, in losing such a father.

. What a reverse in such a moment of time ! The being dearest to his heart, to whom *he* was most dear, who but a quarter of an hour before, was suggesting plans for his happiness, opening to his view scenes of anticipated bliss, now lay stretched upon his bed in the silent sleep of death ; and himself too, in the twinkling of an eye, changed from the idolized son to the isolated orphan, without a protector, without a friend on whom he could rely, to guide his progress through the world or guard him from its evils.

This, considering he was in his twenty-fourth year, it may seem somewhat absurd to lament, as far as his own safety is concerned : but it is not ; for having been brought up either at home or at a private academy, he was, with all his natural capacity, at least ten years younger in the knowledge of life than his contemporaries, who had had the advantages of a public-school and university education.

The medical man, whose conduct assumed that of paternal kindness towards the suffering youth, advised him to search amongst his father's papers, to ascertain whether he had left

a will ; but the acute feelings of the broken-hearted son revolted from such an enquiry, till his adviser suggested, that such a document, if it existed, might contain some directions with regard to the funeral, and that a negligence at present on such a point might be the cause of regret to the survivor hereafter :—the right chord had been stricken, and Henry proceeded with avidity to ascertain whether there were any commands of his father's, left for him to execute.

Amongst none of the papers of the deceased could they discover the object of their search, and concluding that there was no will, at least in the possession of the old gentleman at the time of his death, the necessary directions for the mournful ceremony of interment were given by Henry, with as much calmness and composure as he was able to command.

If any thing could have added to the pangs he felt, it would have been the marked and singular silence of the Meadowses on the occasion, who alone of all the neighbours omitted to enquire after the survivor of the melancholy and awful visitation ;—he never mentioned their name during the six days previous to the fu-

neral, nor was it ever mentioned to him; and when the day came which tore from him for ever the loved remains of his adored father, he quitted the village with the only companion he had admitted (the medical attendant), and proceeded to London, without the slightest communication having passed between the families.

To say that his thoughts never reverted to Fanny, would be to give Henry a character with my readers for an exclusive devotion to grief, to which he has no claim; he *did* think of her, and frequently, during his sorrow; but he felt it would be sacrilege to mention his feelings or to suffer an enquiry about worldly objects to pass his lips during the sad period of watching by his father's corpse: he never left the coffin's-side unless removed by the attendants, whose biddings to meals and to his chamber he mechanically obeyed, though the refreshment of the one, and the repose of the other, were equally strangers to his lips and eyes.

After remaining twelve or fourteen days in London, the wretched son returned to the village, and proceeded with his kind and attentive friend to his late father's dwelling, and a bitter

struggle he had in revisiting, for the first time after such a loss, the scenes of all his early happiness. His friend earnestly recommended his seeking society, and impressed upon his mind the absolute necessity of rallying from a grief, which, however natural, he must admit to be unavailing.

It must be allowed, that with this prescription Henry's feelings were partly in accordance; his nearest neighbours were his dearest friends, and conceiving that the event which he so deeply deplored, might have effected some change in circumstances, as far as related to Mrs. Meadows's opinion, or at any rate that it would justify his attempt to renew an intimacy upon which his only hope of future consolation depended, he desired the servant to enquire if that lady was at home.

"Mrs. Meadows, Sir," said the man, "has left this."

"Left this!—when?" enquired his master.

"I saw them go this morning, Sir; not long before you came home."

"Go, then, and ask whither they are gone," said Merton, attempting to affect indifference; "I wish most particularly to know."

The servant accordingly proceeded to obtain the desired *renseignements*, and returned with the information that they were gone to Ramsgate.

“ Ramsgate ! ” said Harry, “ what on earth can have taken them to Ramsgate ! Brighton, it is true, because it is the fashion, is a common resort in the winter ; but not Ramsgate, that ever I heard of !—What can have induced them to betake themselves thither just as the winter is setting in ! ”

The only domestic left at the cottage was an old woman, not half so communicative, perhaps, as a young one would have been, nor half so intelligent as Harry desired ; she knew nothing more than that they were gone to Ramsgate, and did not intend returning before April or May.

“ April or May ; ” murmured Henry, “ then I must go to them : four or five months of doubt and separation would annihilate me : I have no hope of comfort but with them ; and now that all the natural ties which bound me to the world are broken, I cling the faster to those to which I have voluntarily submitted myself. Yet how can I act so decidedly ? Her mother has terminated our acquaintance ; what

right have I to recommence it? My circumstances are rather worse now than they were at the time of her refusal. I have no plea to advance—no claim to make. It seems we are destined to be wretched, and our efforts to avert our destiny are vain!”

At this critical period of his ^{22.}agitating life my poor young friend was attacked by a fever and illness which at one time threatened serious consequences, and which, in fact, produced results more important than were anticipated even by his physicians. For several weeks he remained in a very precarious state, during which period he received considerable attention from Lord Castleton, whose manner and conduct towards him, since his father's death, had very singularly altered: constant messages—frequent calls at the hotel where he was confined, marked the interest his Lordship took in his welfare; and the first house he visited, on his restoration to health, was my Lord Castleton's.

His acceptance of the cordial invitation of his Lordship was not unconnected with a hope touching the affair nearest his heart; for Lord Castleton, although he was too much of a courtier to make any specific promise, had always

expressed a desire generally to be of service to Harry; and the young and sanguine lover thought, by cultivating the acquaintance, he might, under favour of his Lordship's patronage, obtain some official employment of sufficient importance to sanction his seriously and regularly demanding the hand of his adored Fanny.

Now, the truth is, that Henry was nearer preferment than he expected, although, it must be confessed, it was *conditional*; and the question to be decided was one between love and interest. How it affects my hero, and how he receives the indications of coming promotion, we shall presently see.

“There are secrets in all families;”—there was one in the family of Lord Castleton; but, like most family secrets, it was no secret at all; and while those the most deeply interested were flattering themselves that all the world was in the dark about it, all the world was talking of it! The fact is, that Lady Castleton had living with her, a *protégée*—a creature all animation—all passion—full of enthusiasm—volatile and voluble; her wit sparkling as her eyes, her eyes as playful as her wit—she was her Ladyship's constant associate. The lovely

girl was just turned twenty—her figure was perfect symmetry—her eye-brows were dark and arched—her countenance full of expression—her forehead snowy white—and the strong curling ringlets which clustered round it, raven-black.

In her look she bears
A Paradise of ever-blooming sweets;
Fair as the first idea Beauty prints
On the young lover's soul: a winning grace
Guides every gesture, and obsequious love
Attends on all her steps."—

She was a connoisseur in painting, an amateur in music: she played like Cramer, and sang like Catalani. She tampered with her beauty in *outré* dresses, to set fashions, and sported with her wit to establish a character for originality. It was indifferent to *her* what subject was under discussion, or in whose hands she found it; she was always ready for the field, and armed for conquest. Her animal spirits were excellent and unvarying; and the constant excitement and perpetual *sparkle* of her society, endeared her most particularly to Lady Castleton, who had no great turn for exertion herself, and who safely confided the charge of

making the house agreeable to her dear delightful Miss Etherington.

The world, which, as I before said, is pretty well acquainted with family secrets, had attributed this extraordinary affection of her Ladyship for Kate Etherington to one of two causes;—it appeared beyond a doubt, that she was *very nearly related* either to my Lady or my Lord; but as it could be “nobody’s business” to find out any thing more about it, Kate Etherington became an inmate of the house, the pet of the family, and the delight of their friends, without its ever being precisely ascertained who she actually was.

Kate had, in turn, a friend of her own—a dear enthusiastic friend—greatly her senior in years, and much her inferior in intellect; but she was to *her*, invaluable: her bosom was the repository of all Kate’s secrets; by *her* contrivance and agency all events were brought about which Kate merely wished to happen; and never were her assiduities more in request than after Kate had, unfortunately for all parties, passed the day in company with Mr. Henry Merton.

They had frequently met before in that sort of party which is the most unfavourable to

making acquaintances—I mean a party neither small enough to give a fair share of rational intercourse to each person, nor large enough to create a multiplicity of *têtes-à-têtes*. A great city, they say, is a forest where a man is more concealed, and less known, than any where else. A large party, as all my readers know, is the snuggest place in the world for a confidential conversation in a corner.

This day—this unpropitious day, Henry was the object; only two other persons dined in Grosvenor Square; and Kate listened to him with an interest somewhat uncommon in a person who talked so well herself; the characters of wit and listener appear generally to be incompatible with each other; but she was attracted by his talents, flattered by his attentions, struck with his appearance, and, in short, caught by the *tout ensemble* of his qualities, mental and personal.

Perhaps, of all the young men I ever knew, Henry Merton was, at the moment of which I now speak, the most absolutely, entirely, and exclusively devoted to one object; and when he sat down to dinner opposite to Kate Etherington, if any one had insinuated the possibility of her exercising, or even obtaining any power over him, he would have treated the maker of

such suggestion in a manner likely to have induced extremely disagreeable consequences.

Alas! there is a witchery in woman's eye which neither the bravest can resist, nor the wisest controvert; and hard must be his heart, and icy indeed his blood, who can find himself smiled on, and listened to, with pleasure, spoken of, with kindness, and even sought and courted, by a girl like Kate Etherington, and yet be unmoved. But when he sees his influence extend so far as to make the serious girl lively, or the lively girl grave, the thing becomes more touching still, and what between admiration of her *taste* and *judgment*, and gratitude for the proof she gives of them in her preferences, the gentleman soon feels an interest which a very little perseverance on the part of the lady cannot fail to ripen into something more piquant, and perhaps more dangerous.

Kate was one of those splendid perils which a man in his career through life must naturally meet with; *unique* and *distinguée* she went her way, careless of reproof and heedless even of calumny, as the moon travels her course regardless of the bayings of the watch-dogs;—like Una in the forest, she had hitherto made her progress unwounded and unharmed; nor was it

till this fatal day that her sins (and coquetry is a sin) were visited upon her thick and three-fold ; all that she had professed to feel before, she now *really* endured, and the novelty of the sentiment with which her breast was fired, by no means diminished its force.

There are women whose feelings are terribly strong, whose passions are uncontrollably powerful ; Kate was one of those, and aided by all the attractions of mind and person which she possessed, she felt that to decide was to gain her object. The quiet unassuming character of Fanny Meadows she despised ; she knew the continued difficulties of her union with Harry, she saw that every facility would be afforded to such a marriage for herself ; from the evening when he made his first visit to Grosvenor Square the die was cast—her line was taken.

Into the ear of her attendant friend did the enthusiastic Kate pour all her sorrows—all her hopes ; to her did she make the implicit confession which won her heart, and enlisted her in the cause, the good success of which, the *manœuvrers* foresaw, would mainly depend upon the alienation of Harry's affections from Fanny in the first instance. To disturb his tranquillity, unsettle his hopes, and excite his apprehen-

sions, were their primary objects ; and, as his health was not yet deemed sufficiently restored for the prosecution of his journey in pursuit of his beloved, Fate surrendered him into the clutches of the syren, who seemed resolved to lose no time and spare no means in bringing her desperate scheme to perfection.

I cannot trace the infatuated girl through all those little winning trickeries by which she gradually ingratiated herself with the invalid, who, as I foresaw, insensibly and unconsciously sank under the power of her fascination ; day after day rolled on, each producing an engagement for the next, and although the real feelings of his heart were unchanged, and I believe unchangeable, still he was enjoying a dream of pleasure, surrounded by the gayest and the pleasantest society of London, marked by Kate's particular attention as *the* favourite visitor of the house, thrown with her at all times and seasons, as if accidentally, by the contrivances of Miss Fletcher, (her dear confidant,) and treated with the most pointed civility by Lord Castleton, who, if he did not know the secret which appears to us to have died with Merton's father, and which was to have smoothed all difficulties between his family and that of the Meadowses,

certainly implied by his manner a very strong desire that Kate Etherington should become the wife of his young friend.

This marriage was evidently the contingency with which Henry's advancement in public life was incumbered—this marriage was clearly the object of Lord Castleton's anxiety; and, as it was known that Kate had fifteen thousand pounds, (whence derived nobody *did* know,) his Lordship's hints and *innuendos*—his wishes that she were married to some man she loved, and his praises of her talents and virtues, so frequently repeated at every seasonable and unseasonable opportunity to Harry, could have, as Harry thought, but one object—an object he saw and believed impossible of attainment, so far as *he* was concerned;—and yet,—seeing as he did, and feeling the almost importunate and perpetual recurrence of his noble friend to the subject, the web had already entangled him; he could not muster up resolution to break through the trammels with which the artful girl had incumbered him, nor quit at once the Ogygia of Grosvenor Square. Such helpless creatures are men in the hands of the arbitresses of their fate!

Amongst the satellites of the Circean en-

chantress, fluttered a Colonel Livingstone, a pale and shapeless shadow of his former self; but who, for the honour of a little public notice from the object of his humble adoration, would, at her request, lend himself to her little schemes. Fancying himself, therefore, a confidant, but, being all the while, as she intended him to be, most securely in the dark as to her real motives, these exemplary "*remains*" of a *ci-devant* beau were put under requisition, and brought into play against poor Harry; who, I have no doubt, is suffering a little in the estimation of ladies with "constant hearts and true," for lingering here in London, while his Fanny is far away. But I must do him the justice to explain, that *his* object in remaining in town and devoting so much of his time to the Castletons, at this period, was the hope of obtaining, through his Lordship's influence, that, which would *entitle* him to attention and consideration from the mother of his beloved.

Perhaps, for there are many complicated feelings in a lover's heart, he might have been in some degree piqued by the marked neglect of both Mrs. Meadows and her daughter, since his father's death. He might have contrasted the

hauteur, which the upstarts of wealth and weaving played off upon him, with the sweetness of manner and urbanity of the aristocratic friends with whom he was now domesticated. Still, decidedly the leading features of the case were unchanged, and, on the morning when Colonel Livingstone casually, and quite accidentally, introduced the name of Fanny Meadows in the course of conversation, it was as dear to him as ever.

“Fine young woman, upon my honour,” said the Colonel.—“I noticed her at a party of your Ladyship’s last September.”

“And very amiable,” said Lady Castleton—“I was very much interested about her at one period.”

Henry was on thorns.

“She is so extremely single-minded,” said Kate, “she is one of my greatest favourites; a little more animation would make her quite beautiful. But she has so much heart. She is really quite fascinating.”—

“She is going to be married soon,” said the Colonel—

“Who?”—innocently enquired Kate.

“That Miss Meadows.”

“ Indeed,” said Lady Castleton—“ what do *you* say, Mr. Merton ?”

“ Madam,” said Merton—“ I have nothing to say—I have not seen Miss Meadows for more than two months, —— and——”

“ Two months !” exclaimed Kate, “ no, that you certainly have not, for you have been here every day for a much longer time than that ; and I think I can account for your actions during the whole of that period.”

It was all true—true to the letter. Time had imperceptibly glided on—he had parted with Fanny in October, and here was Parliament just meeting :—he felt a pang, such as he had never felt before.

“ She is going to be married to a Captain somebody.”

“ Smith ?” said Kate.

“ No,” said the Colonel.

“ Harvey ?”—

“ No—not Harvey,” said the Colonel.

“ Bruce ?”—

“ No—not Bruce.”

“ I know she *has had* lovers of all those names,” said Kate.

Poor Harry !

"You don't happen to recollect the name, Colonel?" said Harry, as if carelessly.

"Upon my word, I do *not*," answered the Colonel; "but I think it is something like Wilson, or Williamson, or Wilkinson, or Wilkins."

It was enough; he had heard quite sufficient to decide his measures; he knew where the family was staying; repentance—sorrow—anxiety—grief—remorse, and all the conflicting agonies of love, poured themselves into his breast in a moment; he hurried over the conversation, made a thousand excuses, fidgeted himself nearly to death, and got away from her Ladyship's boudoir as fast as possible.

Kate saw her triumph, and gloried in it. She was an adept in countenances; she saw the blood mount into his cheek—saw it recede—and saw, too, with satisfaction, that he endeavoured to deny an interest in Fanny before *her*. *She* then had excited an interest in *him*; were it not the fear of offending her, what could have prevented his more positively and decidedly avowing his disbelief of the story? His affection for Fanny was no new rumour in the Castleton family. Mrs. Meadows had talked

it over with the Countess. It was from their conversation that Kate had gained her information as to the sentiments of the mother towards the lover; besides, he had already gone the desperate length of an elopement, and Fanny, by accompanying him, had publicly declared her feelings for *him*.

Harry took very little time to consider what he should do. The clock had not sounded the eighth hour when he was seated in the Dover royal mail, a mode of travelling he adopted as the most secret and expeditious under the circumstances; and having first written and despatched a note excusing himself from dinner at the Earl's the next day, proceeded as far as Canterbury by the conveyance he had so judiciously adopted.

The reflections which suggested themselves upon the journey were none of the pleasantest. He found, when stimulated by the intelligence he had received, that in point of fact he was quite well enough to undertake the journey, and that, if he had *chosen*, his health would have been adequate to a similar fatigue some time before. He could not avoid reproaching himself with a most unwarrantable neglect of

Fanny, which he attributed to every cause except the right one.

On his arrival at Ramsgate, he proceeded, without taking any rest, to search out his beloved girl; and after a fruitless search of a couple of hours, at length discovered the house which contained his treasure. A female servant, strange to him, opened the door, and replied to his earnest enquiries after the family, that Mrs. Meadows and her daughter had left that place the day before, and she believed they were gone to France.

“More misfortunes!—more miseries! Did any body go with them?” asked Henry.

“Yes, Captain Wilkinson and a young lady.”

“Captain Wilkinson!” exclaimed Harry; “are you speaking truth? or is that only a falsehood conjured up to drive me mad?”

“Oh, we haven’t got no conjurers here, nor witches neither,” said the girl; “so you had better go somewhere else, if you want to play any of your tricks.”

At the conclusion of which pithy speech she shut the door, and retired to her ordinary occupations.

Henry was now nearly distracted, but, resolved not to give up the affair so easily, he knocked again at the door, when a matronly-looking person presented herself, evidently prepared to read him a lecture on the impropriety of his conduct: from *her*, however, whom he presently subdued by his placid countenance and extremely correct behaviour, he learned that the party had *not* gone to France from Ramsgate; that they had proceeded from her house to a village, the name of which she did not remember, and afterwards meant to go on to Dover.

This was sufficient for the ardent swain; he expressed his gratitude to the old lady in the warmest terms, and set off to pursue his flying fair one to a village the name of which he did not know, always secure, however, of finding the party at the place she mentioned as their ultimate destination.

Having therefore returned to the hotel, and refreshed himself, he ordered horses to Canterbury, concluding somewhat hastily, that as the Dover mail was the most convenient means of reaching *that* city, so the nearest route to Dover from Ramsgate must necessarily include Canterbury; this, as our topographical readers

know, is not exactly the case. However, Henry thus proceeded, and at two o'clock left Canterbury for the coast, having made this unnecessary *detour*, as the post-boys supposed, for some very cogent reasons.

Arrived at the Ship inn at Dover, his enquiries recommenced, and were soon satisfied.

"Pray, is there a Mrs. Meadows here?" said he, in breathless anxiety.—"Meadows, Sir," said the waiter—"George, is there any body in the house of the name of Meadows?"

"No," said George, who was in the passage outside the door, "nobody of that name here."

"Yes," cried a shrill voice, issuing from the coral lips of a Patagonian chambermaid, "them peoples name's Meadows as breakfasted here"—

Henry's ears tingled with delight.

"What, the people from the wedding?"—

"What!" murmured Henry—

"Yes, them as is gone over to Calais in the packet."

"Mercy on me!" faltered Merton.

"No, Sir," said the waiter, returning with the information already caught by Henry,

"Mrs. Meadows is not here now; the party are gone to Calais by the steamer."

"The wedding party,—did not somebody say?"

"Yes, Sir," said the man, "Miss Meadows, I recollect now, *was* the name of the young lady; who is the present Mrs. Wilkinson."

"Married!" exclaimed Harry, "is she married?"

"Yes, Sir, they were married, I believe, at some church between Deal and Sandwich, but I did not ask the servants any questions, they were in such a bustle, getting ready for the packet."

"What number did the party consist of?—who were they?"

"There was a middle-aged lady," said the waiter, "the mother I think; and the bride, and two other young ladies: Captain Wilkinson's brother was here till after they embarked, and then returned to Deal."

"How long have they been gone?" asked the distracted young man.

"These four hours, Sir."

Here then the blow had fallen: by his own fatal inattention, by the seductive captivations

of his new and artful acquaintance, he had armed the hostile mother of his doating Fanny with weapons the best calculated for his defeat.

She is lost to him eternally ! They are separated not by rising mountains, not by rolling seas alone ; but the sacred and deciding ceremony, which parts them for ever, has been performed !

His brain was on fire ; his limbs ~~trembled~~ with cold ; remorse, bitter remorse, came over him ; and even the pangs inflicted by Fanny's fickleness were light compared with the stings of his own conscience. He now recalled the days and hours which, under the influence of Kate's fascinations, he had dissipated in London, while, perhaps, *she*, who had risked, who had sacrificed every thing for him, was pining in wretchedness and sorrow ! She had, no doubt, been tortured and tormented into a compliance with the long since avowed determination of her mother, without a friend, without a champion to support her against tyranny and oppression ! Nay, must she not have attributed his silence, his absence, to neglect and forgetfulness ?—were they not justly attributable to those sources ?—this was the ques-

tion he had the "greatest difficulty in answering.

He stood bewildered and amazed—he felt himself alone on the face of the earth ; she was gone—that which had formed his sum of happiness was rifled from him, and he had lost all interest in the world.

The recollection of his own conduct gave the "unkindest cut of all:" unconscious of his actions, yet feeling how useless now pursuit would be, how unavailing every effort of his, he ordered horses back again towards London, where, in her bower bright and fair, sat expectingly, the arbitress of his fate.

She knew whither he had fled ; she knew the motive ; she had touched the spring that set her puppet in motion—the first great end was gained ; all ties between him and Fanny were dissolved—dissolved by her—and he was free ; and would not words of pity, from rosy lips like Kate's, move his cold heart, and win his slighted love ? It was a trial—and one in which, whenever his feelings could be diverted into a suitable train, and when he could be made to feel the injury he had sustained, it was not very improbable Kate would succeed ; but as there

the reasons for every thing, the artful enchantress knew that no time was to be lost; the moments were precious, and she received him when he arrived in town as if unconscious of the object of his rapid journey, and as if all her thoughts were centered in his return.

CHAPTER VI.

“ The heart, like a tendril, accustom’d to cling,
Let it grow where it will cannot flourish alone ;
But will lean to the nearest and loveliest thing
It can twine with itself, and make closely its own.”

WHEN the hurry and surprise of Henry’s journey, and the discovery so fatal to his happiness, had a little subsided, and he began to weigh the extraordinary conduct of Fanny in the opposite scale to his own apparent negligence, he felt it extremely difficult to believe that any girl of sense and sensibility could have conducted herself in such a manner :—that his once-idolized sylph should so unblushingly, so unfeelingly have violated every tie, broken every pledge, and abandoned every engagement with him, seemed perfectly impossible.

The fact, however, was incontrovertible ; the intelligence had been derived from the

most authentic source; yet, mixed up as every action of his life had been, with misfortune and misery, he resolved not to believe implicitly what had been told him even so authoritatively; and, therefore, straining decorum to its "fullest bent," he undertook a visit to Mrs. Neville, the intimate and bosom friend of the Meadowses, where his fate, already signed, might at all events receive the ratifying seal of confirmation.

Upon enquiring at the house of this lady, he found a servant, who informed him that all the family were in the country except Miss Neville, who was gone to France as bride's-maid to Miss Meadows, now Mrs. Wilkinson.

Here ended every hope: the dart already fixed in his breast received its home-thrust by this information; and with a mind half bewildered he flew to impart his sorrows, his anger, his remorse, his madness, to—Miss Etherington!

To *her*, this poor innocent heart-wounded young gentleman opened all his store of sorrow; from her he received a corresponding quantum of consolation; and while he expressed his mingled grief and surprise at the

fickleness of so fair a creature as Fanny, Kate increased the irritation of his mind by a series of nothingnesses in themselves, but which, to persons in Henry's temper, were "proofs strong as holy writ" of her duplicity, artfulness, and indifference.

Kate armed herself, amongst other strange weapons which she occasionally adopted, with morality, took a high tone, and reasoned gravely upon the levity which could induce *any* girl to consent to an elopement; argued that the spirit which in the first instance could induce her to deceive a mother, and fly from her care and counsel, would, perhaps, at a future period, and under equally delicate circumstances, lead her to abandon her next natural protector. She then appeared deeply affected at his sorrows, glanced at the blindness of persons blessed with such a lot as Fanny's had been, and, in short, in less than two hours convinced Henry that he had made an escape rather than sustained a loss, and that she, Kate, was one of the most amiable, clever, and kind-hearted creatures upon earth.

In less than three days, by a constant adherence to her system, Kate had satisfied

Henry that he had been quite deceived in her on their first acquaintance; that it must have been merely an amatory ophthalmia which affected him, and blinded him to her perfections, in the early stages of their intimacy; and the interest she took in his welfare, the solicitude she expressed for his health and spirits, combined with the dread he had of being ridiculed as a jilted lover—a willow-wearing swain, induced him to think of Kate in a manner quite new to him.

It must not be forgotten, in addition to all this, that Kate had lovers out of number dangling in her train, all of whom she apparently kept at a most respectful distance; for as her love was strong, so was her hate; and she was one of those off-hand girls who take no pains to disguise their feelings or cloke their opinions. Harry felt himself secure of candour from her at all events, and having decidedly lost *her*, on whom, it is true, all his hopes of happiness once rested, he listened attentively to the soothing, flattering language of Miss Etherington, and gazed on her bright eyes till his blood thrilled in his veins.

How can I describe the progress of this

newly-created affection? The advances of such feelings, where the parties are constantly associated, are undefinable. They are as imperceptible, but as sure in their results, as the growing of the hyacinths in Miss Kate's conservatory. Watering the flowers, it is true, brings them forward; and a well-introduced tear often matures the sentiment very unexpectedly. A tear, did I say? The richest gem in the universe would have less effect upon the heart of man, than one tear of affection shed for him by the woman he loves, and who, he thinks, loves him.

One fatal morning, Miss Etherington and her hoodwinked slave were alone. He was talking of fickleness generally; he had ceased for some time to recur to Fanny Meadows personally; he was, perhaps, somewhat artfully lamenting his lot, when he saw trickling down Kate's flushed cheek, one of those deciding drops which had stolen gently from her languid eyes, speaking tacitly the burning passion of her soul.

The crisis had arrived:—their looks met—a momentary pause ensued—they gazed on each other:—the struggle of thoughts and feelings was short—Fanny was in the instant forgot-

ten, and Kate, clasped closely to his beating heart, confessed by silence and in sighs, her joy and her love.

To argue the point now, whether Henry's character was degraded or exalted by his rapid abandonment of Fanny, or his philosophical accommodation to circumstances, is not my purpose. I recount the fact as it occurred; but lest he should fall in the estimation of my fair readers, I think it right to bespeak a little favour for him. He was playing a dangerous game with dangerous weapons; and the moment he found himself deceived and neglected, it was natural he should turn to one so fascinating as Kate really was, and who had previously evinced a powerful interest in his fate. Where a woman is concerned, (and in what affair of life is she not the *primum mobile*?) it is impossible to lay down any rule of action. Man is so completely the creature of her will, and the slave of her commands, that axioms and maxims applicable to the ordinary concerns of the world, wholly fail, when brought to the test of female influence.

At all events, jilted and discarded by one whom we all thought so amiable, he has engaged himself in an union with another, whose dash-

ing exterior must claim our admiration, but whose domestic qualities certainly do not seem to demand our affection. Never mind; we may all be mistaken, and every thing may be for the best;—perhaps the masculine mind and undaunted disposition of Kate will better amalgamate with the kind, undecided, hasty, unfortunate character of Harry, than the milder, and softer temper of Fanny Meadows.

Such hold, however, still had his *first love* upon the thoughts of Merton, that when he began to review his conduct, and the events of the morning, he found all his feelings towards Kate comparative. He judged of her charms as they affected him, relatively to those of Fanny; and, although he had now abandoned for ever the former object of his adoration, he could not yet admit the newly received idol to more than a secondary place in his heart: from which it may be inferred, upon the principle that no man can love more than one—at a time, that Harry, although he had obeyed the impulse of a mingled passion, made up of revenge, gratitude, personal admiration, and strong feeling, still *loved* only Fanny; for true it is, that

——— “The hallow'd form is ne'er forgot
Which first love traced;
Still it lingering haunts the greenest spot
On Memory's waste.”

The die, however, was cast, his fate was decided, and urged to immediate action by his anxiety to possess his treasure, to astonish the town, and, above all, to pique Miss Meadows, he lost no time in laying the state of his heart before Lord Castleton, who received the intelligence with very little surprise, and a great display of satisfaction.

“It may not be improper now,” said his Lordship, “to tell you who Kate is, Mr. Merton,—for she herself hardly knows. She is the daughter of a respectable Clergyman in Suffolk, the incumbent of the parish in which we once resided. When my only daughter Eliza died, now eighteen years since, the event had a powerful effect upon poor Lady Castleton; this little girl, then nearly of the same age, attracted her attention, by an imaginary likeness to our lost child.”

Merton observed that his Lordship emphasized the word imaginary, with peculiar force.

“We obtained permission of her father to adopt her, and she has remained one of our-

selves ever since, and never has quitted us, except occasionally to visit her surviving parent. She has wonderful spirits, excellent talents, which have been highly cultivated. She is always gay, always agreeable, and in giving her up, I assure you we shall make a great sacrifice. I honestly admit, that I know of no person to whom I should with greater satisfaction surrender her, than to yourself; and most opportunely does your proposal come before me, as I am enabled, by a chain of singularly fortunate circumstances, to place you in an official situation, honourable and respectable, and worthy your character and abilities—which, while it redeems the pledge I long since gave to your late respected father, enables me to ensure a competence for the young creature, in whom I am so deeply interested."

The conversation thus auspiciously commenced, continued in the same strain, and concluded with the annunciation, that the young lady was to bring her fifteen thousand pounds to the common stock; that it was to be settled on herself, and that with part of his own income, and that derivable from his office,

Merton's life was to be insured for such a sum as would leave her a handsome annuity in case of his death.

Merton's luck seemed entirely changed ; he could hardly believe all that he saw, real, all that he heard, true. Here he was, having disentangled himself from an engagement with a girl who never could have loved him, on the point of marriage with a beautiful, accomplished, *recherchée* young creature ; on the eve of appointment to an office, productive of an excellent income, which, with the addition of her fortune, would place him in a station in society, where he might live on, sought, courted and caressed, by the bravest, the wisest, and the wittiest amongst us. It all appeared like a charming dream, and the only apprehension he felt was, that he was *too* happy.

To the ardour of Kate's feelings, and the strength of her attachment, Henry attributed the eagerness which she so openly expressed for the marriage ; and it must be confessed that the fond lover, accustomed as he had been in his early *practice* to the soft timidity of Fanny, that silent eloquence, that winning diffidence which marked every action of her

life, was somewhat startled by the undaunted manner in which Kate began making her arrangements; nor, to say truth, did he think her tenderness at all increased as the auspicious day approached; so rapidly, however, were things conducted, that in order to be married before Lent—a point Miss Etherington made, doubtlessly in accordance with her religious scruples, the ceremony was actually to take place in ten days. Whether this event was likely to verify the proverb, which says,—

“Happy’s the wooing
That’s not long a-doing,”

we shall in the course of time find out.

The situation so conveniently and recently made in a new colony was bestowed upon Henry according to Lord Castleton’s promise, and the newspapers of the United Kingdom rang with his appointment to an office the duties of which he was led to believe were performed four times in every year, upon those particular occasions so well celebrated by the parodist, who sings—

“There’s nothing half so sweet in life
As *Quarter-day*!”

It was, the world said, a *sinecure*, and therefore, when the London journals publicly declared Mr. Merton admirably qualified to fulfil its duties, the wags were sneering—an amusement, by the way, infinitely less profitable, under similar circumstances, than that of being sneered at.

Once nominated to office, Henry felt his footing; he now saw the cup of happiness at his lip, and consoling himself with the rectitude of *his* conduct, and the shamelessness of hers for whom he would have sacrificed every thing under the sun, he loved the laughing hours away till the happy morning arrived which was to make the charming Kate his wife:—but, when on that day, the sun beaming through his curtains awakened him to felicity and love, he could not help reverting to Fanny. He was going to the altar, and not with her;—still, say what he might, smile as he would, it was a sore place—Fanny—Fanny was ever before him.

The steps of St. George's, Hanover Square, were thronged with little boys and girls, their mothers and their fathers, their uncles and their aunts, to see the bridal pageant of a fashionable couple; but the pride which apes humility was strong upon the bride, and passing through

Maddox-street, the carriages deposited their lovely burthens at the door of the vestry-room, and were sent empty round into George-street to disappoint the mobility of a gaze at those, who in a little hour more would attract no gaze whatever.

The ceremony was performed by the Dean of Leicester; the bride was announced in all the papers as lovely, the bridegroom flourished forth as Henry Merton, Esq. Chief Secretary to the Government at Melville Island; the travelling carriage was new and unique—the day was charming—the ceremony imposing, and the happy couple left town immediately after its conclusion, to pass the honey-moon at a seat of Lord Castleton's in Sussex.

This last arrangement was a manœuvre of Henry's, who, though he had given directions to his servants to prepare his own villa for the reception of himself and bride, could not summon sufficient resolution to take her in the first instance to the scene of all the early joys of his acquaintance with Fanny; so that, after all, *she* had an influence over him—her spirit was near him, and he could not endure the association of every object which met his eyes with the

still unfaded remembrances of his Fanny false and fair.

As he was quitting the hotel for Lord Castleton's, his man ran after the carriage to ask what he was to do with any letters which might arrive for him, and received his master's directions to pack them up with his clothes which were to be sent down the next day.

Every arrangement concluded, and Kate his own, away they went, accompanied by Miss Fletcher, the shadow of the now Mrs. Merton, and reached the Arcadian scene of all their future happiness to a late dinner.

Artists draw Cupid blind, they say, because they cannot paint his eyes; it is impossible I should adequately describe the joys which blest the enraptured pair in their seclusion, and therefore I shall leave them to the enjoyment of their "shady blest retreat."

" Hora deliciis, jocis, susurris,
Hora suaviolis parique magnis,
O! felix Juvenis, Puella felix."

The calm repose of Ashdale Park, and the uninterrupted delight of his Kate's society,

were wonderfully soothing to Henry, who while, like Selkirk, he was "monarch of all he surveyed," felt an entirely new sensation, and *à l'abris* from all worldly ills, gazed upon his fascinating bride, and contemplated his own circumstances with a placid satisfaction hitherto quite unknown to him.

Kate was assiduous to please, to amuse him; her conversation was as lively and vivacious as ever; her harp was always in tune; her pencil always at hand: she was always on the alert to give pleasure—always in the van of any party formed for amusement. Time seemed never to lag while she was present; every thing which she approached partook of the *couleur de rose*, with which all her observations, all her anecdotes, all her histories glowed: in short, she was the seventh statue of the magic palace.

At breakfast on the third morning of this bright felicity, the servant who had just received and unpacked his master's trunks, entered the room, and gave Henry two letters, which had arrived just as he was going to church on the wedding-day.

Henry opened the first, and glanced his eye over what he perceived was a matter-of-form

circular from a fire-office, announcing the expiration of the policy of insurance upon his house in the country, regarding which as uninteresting twaddle, he hastily closed and stuffed it into his coat-pocket. The second, franked by a member from Cowes in the Isle of Wight, he broke open, and found to be from a person no less interesting than his fickle Fanny!—It ran thus:—

“MY DEAREST HENRY, East Cowes, Feb. 18.

“What an uncertain life do we lead!—how variable and varying are our prospects! Fate, which has hitherto frowned, now looks cheeringly—indeed, I am so elated as hardly to be mistress of my pen.

“How I love Lord Castleton!—for, in point of fact, to him I am sure we are indebted for your preferment, which we saw in the newspapers. I conclude you will not be obliged to reside on your new appointment, which is in a place, Capt. Wilkinson tells me, the existence of which is not yet perfectly ascertained.

“You must pardon my boldness, dearest Henry, and I must not mind my blushes; you cannot see them: it is almost all owing to

dear Lucy; but you may as well know it at once—Mamma has positively *consented to our marriage*, and has given me leave to tell you so!”

“What!” exclaimed Henry, starting from his seat—“is she mad?”

“Mad, dearest love!” said Kate, “tell me who is your correspondent, and I will answer the question.”

“Stay, stay, dearest,” replied Henry; “I fancy it is I who am mad!”—He proceeded to read——

“I have but one single stipulation to make beforehand, and I know, after Lord Castleton’s kindness, you will find some difficulty in granting my request; but I do entreat you not to force me into an acquaintance with a great ally of your’s, I know—I mean Miss Etherington, whose manners have in them a something I cannot endure, and of whom they tell all sorts of stories which I cannot venture to repeat. However, I am running on hardly knowing what I say, so perfect is my happiness, nor shall I add one word more except to beg you to come down to us while Mamma is

in her present temper, which I believe has been partly produced by your official preferment. Heaven bless you, dearest Henry!

Your invariably attached,

FANNY MEADOWS."

Was he alive!—was he awake!—what did it mean! The postscript, (important portion of a lady's letter,) threw sufficient light upon the subject to make his misery complete.

"We have been to France, and spent three weeks at Boulogne with our bride, Mrs. Wilkinson, who was a namesake of mine, and my first cousin; they had just returned from India, and were unknown to you: she is a very nice girl, and Capt. Wilkinson is a remarkably pleasant person, and I am sure you will like him."

Of all the evils which had befallen my hero this was the most dreadful; for, putting its great importance out of the question, it was so entirely of his own seeking, produced by his own rash impetuosity, by his readiness of belief in the infidelity of a being wholly devoted to him, by his hasty mode of satisfying himself of facts, and by his unwarrantable and

unjustifiable indifference to his own best interests, that he literally had nobody to reproach but himself.

There are various sorts of reproofs, there are innumerable corrections to which man in the course of his life is necessarily subjected, which he feels deeply, yet which appear not to the world; but there is no reproof so stinging as self-reproof: for a man to be conscious that he has baffled himself, is for him to be as unhappy as man can be. Henry's anger at having, *self-directed*, mistaken Fanny's cousin for Fanny—his having *himself* followed the languishing maid, fancying her the laughing bride—his having *himself* directed his course from Ramsgate to Dover through Canterbury, by which delay he exactly missed his object—his having then *himself* offered *himself* to Kate, having *himself* given up the beloved object of all his hopes upon his own evidence, were so many daggers piercing his heart at the same moment.

He could ill-conceal his feelings; and Kate was too apt a physiognomist not to perceive the effect the perusal of the letter had upon her husband. She saw the workings of his countenance; she guessed the writer of the de-

spatch—she guessed its contents; and aware that the bubble had burst, and that her deception (for *she* all along knew Fanny was not married) was on the eve of discovery, gave Miss Fletcher one of those telegraphic hints with which the friends were perfectly conversant, and hastily concluding their breakfast, the ladies left the room together to prepare for a walk, Kate concealing with infinite caution from poor Henry the nature of her suspicions, or the extent of her information.

The letter Henry had just read, and which in itself was enough to bewilder him, was only the *avant-courier* of one, which had just arrived *per post* from town, and which, with others, his man laid on the table as the ladies retired: the same post-mark, and Fanny's own handwriting, flashed upon his sight, and bursting open the seal he read these lines:—

“Am I indeed to trust the evidence of my senses? Now, indeed, has fallen upon me the bitter judgment of disobedience! That the account of your marriage, which I have just read in the newspapers, is true, I cannot doubt; and I should have felt too much injured, too much outraged, to have written one line, or

asked one question upon the subject, but that I alone of those who were once your friends and advocates, am convinced that some undue influence has been obtained over you ; and that the event, the intelligence of which has paralyzed me, has been brought about by some misrepresentation, some odious calumny, some detestable falsehood.

“ It is this, which has induced me so far to forget my injuries, and subdue my pride, as to address these lines to you, which are written in such agitation, that I fear you will be unable to make them out. I have suffered reproaches innumerable for my conduct—that it has been incautious, who can deny ? but it was for you I erred—it was you who took me from my mother’s roof, having professed an unalterable affection for me,—I believed your professions—I risked every thing—I sacrificed the love of a mother—I took a step almost unjustifiable in the eyes of the world for you.

“ Something, then, must have been said ; some hideous aspersion cast upon me, so completely to have changed your feelings towards me. It is true, the proofs you have given of carelessness of my good opinion are

many. Your appearance in Thayer-street, your manner and occupation in the Park, all now flash upon my mind as pointed proofs of your negligence, perhaps of a wilful desire to open my eyes, and induce *me* to change my conduct towards you. If they were, they failed, and I am your victim. Yet I ask, I condescend to ask, as a favour, that you will in justice to me, in pity to my anxious feelings, tell me whether you have any reason to offer for the extraordinary and sudden alteration in your sentiments. As I am above all disguise with *you*, so I implore you, use no deception with *me* upon this subject. That you may be happy, will be my constant prayer; and I shall make atonement for the sins of disobedience and ingratitude, which have placed me in the cruel position where I now find myself, by devoting myself to the service of my fellow-creatures, and, in a life of solitude and repentance, endeavour to make my peace with my Maker and with myself.

“ If it be matter of triumph, you are welcome to know that happiness never can be mine; and that I devoutly pray that you may be blessed with every earthly comfort. In my whole heart there is not such a feeling as anger

towards *you*. I know you have been deceived, and I grieve for the pangs which I fear I am even now inflicting,—render me the justice I ask ; and believe me

“ Yours sincerely,

“ FANNY MEADOWS.”

Was ever man in such a predicament ? What on earth could he do?—which way could he turn?—how could he decide ? Could he explain to Fanny all the misadventures which had occurred, in a letter ? Could he leave his bewitching Kitty the third day of the honeymoon, to visit her rival ? What business could he have with Miss Meadows ? He would, perhaps, be denied admittance to her presence—he would be pointed at—stigmatized as the recreant bridegroom ! It was impossible to come to a conclusion hastily.

Ruminating upon what line of conduct to pursue, Fanny and her influence predominating above every other consideration, he saw amongst his letters that moment received one from Liverpool : it was from a friend and schoolfellow just arrived from the West Indies, who not knowing of his marriage begged him to come down to him at that place. Putting a falsehood into the scale against his anxiety to clear him-

self in Fanny's estimation, he resolved to announce to Kate the urgent necessity he was under of taking an immediate journey to Liverpool: not that he had any more idea of actually going thither, than he had of undertaking a voyage to St. Kitt's itself.

He weighed the extraordinary appearance of "leaving the bride," if not, as the unrivalled poet of the north has it, "at the altar," at least so shortly after the nuptial celebration, against the injustice he had done Fanny, and the sufferings she was at that moment enduring on his account. Kate entered the room as he was deliberating the point; he knew that the blow must be struck at once, if at all; and, therefore, mustering all his courage, he began with a certain length of face and preface, to inform his dear wife that he had just received intelligence, in consequence of which, he felt that he ought instantly to start for Liverpool, but that he felt too, how totally impossible it was for him to quit her, and begged to know, (tremblingly alive to the answer,) whether she felt inclined to accompany him.

Luckily she had no such inclination; indeed, she received the intelligence of his projected

journey with remarkable complacency, for Kate loved London, and did *not* love her husband ! This may seem strange to those who are not quite in the secret ; those who *are*, may, perhaps, now find a reason for her extreme haste and anxiety for the marriage, in some other feeling than that of mere affection for Harry ; and it must be confessed, that the prospect of a return to the metropolis in the society of Miss Fletcher, more than counterbalanced the distress she *affected* to feel at a few days' separation from her new lord and master.

Henry was astonished, perhaps a little piqued, at the philosophy with which she made the necessary arrangements for her return to town, and somewhat surprised when she announced her determination of proceeding to Miss Fletcher's house in Curzon-street, rather than to Lady Castleton's in Grosvenor-square. She said " she had her reasons ;" and though reasons were as plentiful as blackberries, she would give Hal none upon compulsion ; nor was he, in his present temper of mind, at all disposed to assume the right he possessed, of enquiring more minutely into his domestic affairs. His heart was in the Isle of Wight, and his lady

might have committed any act of extravagance or intemperance unheeded and unchecked by him, so that it did not interfere with his projected plan of sending his body after his thoughts.

All this was very promising as the beginning of a married life. The falsehood of the husband—the perfect indifference of the wife to his departure—the object of his visit to the country—the inducement for her return to town;—it was indeed a bad start, and extremely well adapted to illustrate that favourite adage,—“Marry in haste, and repent at leisure.” But I have no time, no space, no opportunity to work out that proverb here, and shall therefore content myself by stating, that post-horses were sent for, trunks packed up, carriages loaded, servants booted, and postboys mounted; and in less than an hour, the ardent bridegroom was galloping to Southampton to meet his first love; and the lovely bride dashing to London to enjoy the society of Miss Fletcher and her friends, amongst whom perhaps she might discover more than one who were as well satisfied as herself with the departure of Merton for the country.

CHAPTER VII.

"Hang her! I do but say what she is—so delicate with her needle—an admirable musician!—O! she will sing the savageness out of a bear! of so high and plenteous wit and invention."

"She's the worse for all this."

"Oh a thousand, thousand times!"

NEVER, perhaps, was adopted a more singular mode of passing the first week of the honey-moon, than that which was hit upon by Harry and his eccentric bride—a few hours took her to town, and a few more carried him to Southampton, whence, after having refreshed himself with a Delphin edition of dinner, under the auspices of Mrs. Ling, and a night's repose, he started in the morning packet for the place of his destination.

Dull and dark looked the lovely little island as they rounded Calshot, and a drizzling

rain and fresh breeze (as the sailors call a wind fit to blow the teeth out of one's head,) gave as many additional *désagréments* to the passage, as even Henry, with *his* luck, could have expected.

Arrived at Cowes, down whose narrow streets the rain was pouring in torrents, and having in vain searched at Moir's for the residence of Fanny; having gone to the Fountain Head for information, culled the prurient Vine, and enquired at the Hotel, he at length repaired to the post-office, where he discovered, that in consequence of the sudden indisposition of Miss Meadows, the family had left Cowes the night before and were gone,—the Post-Master knew not exactly whither: their letters were to be forwarded to a mercantile house in London—their own progress, he therefore considered very uncertain. And here my hero found himself, as usual, just too late.

Upon application at the residence they had left, he ascertained that they were gone to Southampton; and as they had taken their departure by the preceding evening's packet, they, in all probability, had slept in the same town with him, and not impossibly in the same inn.

This probability proved to be the fact, and when Henry got back to Southampton, which he did by one o'clock, he beheld his adored, outraged Fanny in company with her mother, another lady, and a man, whom he concluded to be Captain Wilkinson, of whom he had heard too much already.

His heart beat violently as he approached the group. The Captain saw that something affecting was about to occur, by an exclamation of Fanny to her mother, who, raising her glass in order to ascertain the reality of her daughter's perturbation, beheld my hero extending his hand in token of friendship.

This was a puzzling moment for all parties—a trying one for Fanny. As for Mrs. Meadows, she regarded Merton with more than ordinary complacency—his fate was decided, his eternal separation from her daughter was sealed. And, as although she had, in consideration of his valuable appointment, submitted to the entreaties of Fanny and Lucy Neville, she still “looked up,” and felt no displeasure in finding her child yet free to accept the proffered coronets, which, she had no doubt, would be laid at her feet during the ensuing spring.

Fanny's agitation was great, and had it not been for the support of one of those splendid emblems of liberal justice, through which the dazzling gas pours its flickering beams amongst the Southamptonites, I verily believe she would have fallen to the ground. Mrs. Wilkinson saw the state in which she was, and offered her her arm, leaning on which, and collecting her shattered spirits, she proceeded to speak to and look on her faithless lover.

She never doubted his truth, the conviction upon her mind was strong that he had been duped and deluded, and, unfortunately for the future harmony of his domestic life, he very speedily discovered that his bride never could *have believed the fact* of Fanny's marriage, and that the scene with Colonel Livingstone was an *arrangement*, of which the Colonel had spoken jocosely afterwards, contrived and got up for the better carrying on the plot, and exemplifying the well-known axiom that "all's fair in love."

Mrs. Meadows felt extremely awkward in Henry's presence; so did all the party. His appearance there, for which he accounted by his desire to relieve Fanny's mind from the apprehension she had expressed, and at the same

time to exonerate himself from the suspicion of deliberate fickleness, was extremely strange, under his peculiar circumstances; and every one of the group saw and was conscious of the impropriety, nay, the indelicacy of his remaining where he was, while his better-half was "neglected and forlorn." He, to be sure, knew that his furlough *must* be extended, in order to give a probability to his story of the Liverpool expedition, but he had not the courage to confess the stratagem to which, so early in his marital career, he had been driven. There was, indeed, a sort of feverish doubt as to what was best to be done in their proceedings, which every body has felt who has ever done any thing extremely pleasant, still labouring under the idea that, perhaps, it was a little wrong.

The consequence of all this was, a certain whispering, now and then rising into a tone loud enough to be overheard by the two or three persons not actually engaged in it. Fanny and her Mamma, and the young Mrs. Wilkinson, were the principal performers; (Lucy Neville was gone—for it was on account of her anxiety to get to town, and not on account of Fanny's illness, that they were at Southamp-

ton,) and the even tenour of their murmuring conversation was broken here and there by bursts of "indeed I shall not"—"by no means,"—"Lord bless me,"—"I would not for the world,"—and such like disclaimers, on the part of the matron, of some scheme which her younger companions appeared to be enforcing.

During this consultation, which took place before Mr. Lomer's shop-windows, a carriage dashed past them, as rapidly as four galloping horses could bear it along. One of its inhabitants, enveloped in fur and frogs, and illustrated with mustachios, waved his white-gloved hand either to Henry, or Captain Wilkinson, *en passant*, but the *impetus* with which the vehicle rolled away, prevented either of the gentlemen from ascertaining who their friend might be.

After a good deal of fidgeting and fevering, and a determination on the part of Mrs. Meadows not to encourage Henry's stay, by going into the inn, she informed him that they were on the move for Bath, and that the carriage was ordered at two, to commence the journey. With an exclamation of joy, he declared this to be the most convenient of all

possible things, that he had actually the most pressing business in that city, and that if there was room for one, any where in, or about the carriage, he would take this opportunity of doing what he ought to do.

The business of the man in the play, who has correspondents in every quarter of the globe, must be light by comparison with Henry's. By his own account he had the most urgent affairs in every part of the United Empire, and while his inevitable duty at Liverpool took him suddenly to Southampton, his sudden recollection of "business at Bath," promised to delay his return to his duty in London.

One can quite feel for Mrs. Meadows; she always *liked* Henry, yet always feared him; she dreaded his influence over her daughter, and her perpetual watchfulness of what was going on, marred all the satisfaction she otherwise would have felt in his extremely agreeable society. Now here he was as pleasant, if not as lively as ever, and the *safest* of all human beings—he was married: the sting was extracted, and his buzzing was innocuous; but still the consciousness that he ought to be with his wife, and if not with her, certainly not with

Fanny, filled her mind, and had she not argued with herself upon the impossibility of her preventing a free agent from doing as he liked, and going where he pleased, and convinced herself that she had neither the power nor the right to control his actions, she no doubt would have made a more strenuous opposition to the plan which was suddenly and somewhat archly matured by Mrs. Wilkinson, who, cold as it was, proposed a *tête-à-tête* with her dear George on the dickey, while the servants were to be put behind, and Henry make the third with Fanny and her mother in the barouche.

This was all mighty pleasant, yet there is not a human being who hears of it, who will not set it down as extremely wrong ; but, as I have often said before, I am not defending other people's actions ; I am stating facts as they have occurred—so must my readers take them. I admit the thing was not done in the high tone which many people would have assumed after the defection of an engaged lover ; the circumstances, however, were peculiar—the case an unfortunate one. Yet it behoves me to add, that the reason avowed by Mrs. Meadows for her present conduct, and for not being unkind

to Merton, which was "that the poor fellow was as much attached to Fanny as ever," appears to me to be about the very worst she could possibly have assigned.

The progress from Dolphins to Antelopes, from Southton to Sarum, seemed to the two parties principally concerned as the magical flight of a moment. In its course, however, much mischief was done, and no earthly good; for by Harry's exculpation of himself from all his apparent misconduct he so firmly re-established himself in Fanny's affection, as to bring *her* into the extremely unpleasant situation of being devotedly attached to a man she could never marry; while by the expression of her consequent regard for him, Henry became confirmed in the opinion he had already formed, that he never could attach himself to the woman to whom he was irrevocably united.

And all this happened under the sanction of a woman of the world! I am sure my readers will join with me in wishing it may turn out well.

Arrived at Salisbury, the cathedral (more gay, but less magnificent and interesting than that of Winchester,) with its three hundred and sixty-five windows, its fifty-two pillars, its lofty

spire, its beautiful cloisters with their spiderless roofs, its florid choir and chapter-house, arrested the attention of the travellers. The evening service was performing—the voices of the choristers reverberated through the lengthening arches—the loud swelling notes of the organ first agitated and then soothed its hearers:—in short, the combination of time, place, and circumstance, was more than poor Fanny had bargained for; and the sentiments which filled her affectionate and too sensible heart, as she leant upon the arm which Henry had proffered, were such as I do not pretend to define:—perhaps it is as well not to be too minute in the scrutiny.

“*Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute,*” says the proverb; and here, spite of impropriety, feeling, delicacy, and all sorts of things, was Henry domesticated with Fanny; Wilkinson giving into his stay without any remonstrance, because he found him extremely agreeable as an addition to the party, because he had no right to doubt the truth of his assertion as to his business at Bath, and because the affair was none of his.

The most unwarrantable part of Henry's conduct was his having predetermined to make his

absence from London correspond as to its duration with the time necessary for a journey from town to Liverpool, and his precaution in telling Kate that her writing would be useless, as his stay at that town would not exceed a few hours, and that he should return by the same conveyance which would bring her an answer, or, indeed, any letter he might write to her. All this manœuvring he might have spared himself; for the interest she took in his movements was not quite so great as he, poor easy man, flattered himself it was.

The evening at Salisbury was passed at cards; for Mrs. Meadows called in the aid of loo to divert the party from their own thoughts, and, above all, from any conversation touching the present state of their affairs; upon which she felt with the proverb, that "the least said was the soonest mended;" and still fidgety and uncomfortable at the extraordinary addition which had been made to their little circle, and rejoicing that it was in the country, and where none of the previous circumstances were known, she fluttered away the hours till bed-time.

In the morning the appearance of Henry not only caused no surprise, because he had avowed his intention of proceeding to Bath,

but it caused little emotion—it had become habitual, and the whole breakfast passed away without one allusion to Mrs. Merton, some of the party thinking that they had joked my hero quite enough upon the subject, and others thinking it was not a thing to be made a joke of.

It may strike my readers as extraordinary that after the *eclat* of the affair at Gretna-green, and the subsequent conduct of Mrs. Meadows, Henry should have come to such terms with her. It will not surprise those who know the power of love:—those who feel astonished at Mrs. Meadows's present cordial reception of her then rejected son-in-law, should consider that, putting her schemes for Fanny's aggrandizement out of the question, she was the best-natured creature on earth; and now that his situation prevented the possibility of his interfering with her favourite projects, she could not bear to appear harsh or unkind to Merton, whom she always personally liked, and now sincerely pitied.

The journey from Salisbury to Bath, like that from Southampton to Salisbury, was made up of reminiscences, of enquiries, of recriminations, exculpations, and all that sort of thing, which completely characterized the persons

holding the conversation—for lovers never talk of any thing but themselves; and ladies a little given to flirting in their youth have no pleasure in their middle age so great as reverting to the flirtations of others; and thus employed, the little party “murdered time,” till they descended into that vale of vapour wherein stands the lovely city destined for their residence.

With the day of their arrival in Bath the stay of Henry with them was to end, and although the whole afternoon passed away and he went upon no business, made no calls, executed no commissions, nobody was so rude as to put him under examination as to his *real* inducement for accompanying them thus far; and when he took leave of them on his return to town, after breakfast on the second morning, and when he was actually gone, it seemed for the first time to occur to Mrs. Meadows how extremely improper, how cruelly unfeeling, and how very shocking his conduct to Mrs. Merton had been in staying from her so long. All this consciousness of impropriety came rather too late;—the consequences of his conduct remain to be developed.

My young bridegroom, full of gloom and vexation, set off for London, proposing to sleep

somewhere on the road so as to fill up the time which he calculated he *must* be absent from town, to give probability to his story.

To what an infinity of toil, of labour in vain, did he subject his mind and imagination! How much trouble of thinking and calculating might he have saved himself had he known more, and fancied less!

The elegant, "gallant, gay Lothario," who had dashed by Henry in his travelling carriage at Southampton, was no other than Sir Harry Lavington, a baronet, a lancer, and a lady-killer. He had that moment landed from Havre, and was on his road to London, which place, in six hours and a quarter, he reached in the full enjoyment of health and spirits.

That he had seen the idol of Kate's soul, even if he had recognized Sir Harry's person, *en passant*, Henry would not have thus instinctively discovered: so it was; and the very first door at which the interesting libertine thought it agreeable to call was that of Miss Fletcher in Curzon-street. This was not purely accidental; it was the "force of habit."

Having, on his way from Paris, exactly missed the London papers which announced the abrupt marriage of Miss Etherington,

an event not calculated upon when he left England, Sir Harry was not aware that she had changed her state; and upon his admission to Miss Fletcher's boudoir, finding his blooming Kate sitting there as he had so often found her before, he had no conception, of course, that she was any thing but Miss Etherington. Kate, on the other hand, concluded that Lavington had heard of her marriage, and therefore made no remark about it; but after some time had elapsed and the conversation had taken a general turn, without his alluding to the happy circumstance, she thought it right to let him know the fact, by asking him, "why he did not enquire after Mr. Merton?"

"Faith," said the Baronet, "I need not enquire after him, for I have seen him so lately, so well and apparently so happy, that solicitude on his account would be affectation."

"Saw Mr. Merton!" said Miss Fletcher.

"Where, Sir Harry?" asked his wife.

"Flirting with the girl he ran away with," replied the Baronet; "so I suppose the matter is all made up, and they will be married in earnest."

"What! have you been at Liverpool?" enquired Kate with no little agitation.

“ Liverpool ! in the name of coffee-bags and sugar hogsheads, what should I have been doing at Liverpool ? ”

“ Where then did you see Merton ? ”

“ At Southampton, yesterday. ”

A match in a powder magazine could not have caused a greater explosion. To Kate—a girl of the strongest passions, the most ungovernable feelings, this announcement was nearly fatal—to her happiness and respectability perfectly so. What, she !—Kate—Kate Etherington !—the star, the magnet, the idol of a circle ! abandoned, deserted on the third day of the honeymoon for the despised Fanny Meadows !—Was it slighted love that roused this tempest in her breast ? Was it jealousy that tore her heart with a thousand pangs ? No : it was mingled anger and joy by which she was overcome ;—anger, that she had failed to captivate—anger, that her artful scheme of detaching Henry from Fanny had failed in its purpose—angry consciousness that her plottings would be discovered, and she exposed—anger, that she had been duped, deceived by a man for whose intellect she had no respect ;—these were her angry feelings !

Her joy arose from the recollection that

Lavington—her beloved Lavington was the messenger who brought the tidings—that he was the first mover of her rage and revenge, and that he was on the spot to reap the fruits he had so unconsciously matured. To do Lavington justice, I must assert his innocence as to any manœuvring here—he literally was, as I have shewn, ignorant of the marriage, and when Miss Fletcher, after leading the mourning Kate from the room, informed him of the real state of things, his surprise at the moment nearly overcame his satisfaction.

What passed that night in Curzon-street, it will not be expected that I should detail; those who have seen a high-spirited girl of strong feelings and vindictive nature labouring under a sense of injury, full of pride and passion, struggling against the assaults of commingled jealousy of one, and love for another, may imagine the agonizing contest which Kate sustained with herself and Lavington during the evening; those who know human nature, will know that such a contest could have but one result. Suffice it to say,—that night witnessed Kate's disgrace, and Merton's dishonour.

On the Friday morning, Merton arrived in town, and not yet satisfied with the revenge

she had taken, Kate resolved to lead him onward till she entangled him in a combination of falsehoods, from which she then intended to be good-natured enough to extricate him.

. On his approach she received him with composure, and in tears—tears, he thought, of love, and pitied the fond fool's tenderness : he pressed her to his heart, and thought of Fanny Meadows ; she clasped him to her bosom, and sighed—for Harry Lavington.

“ What, my life,” said Kate, so soon as she was able to speak, “ what has kept you away so long ? I have been wretched, miserable, during your absence ; without you, as Petrarch says, every thing is desolate and wretched, the world itself

‘ Un deserto, e fere aspre e selvagge ’

Where *have* you been ?”

This was a simple question, but like a question put by a child, terrible from its simplicity. Henry, with a countenance unmuffled, and a serenity undisturbed, replied that he had already told her the place of his destination, and added, that be he where he might, his heart was always with her.

“ Now, Merton,” said Kate, looking provokingly pretty and as arch as might be, “ *have you really* been to Liverpool ?”

“ Have I !” said Henry, a little staggered, “ why should you doubt me ? have I not told you so ?”

“ Yes, you have.”

“ Well, then, why do you wish me to repeat what I have already said ?”

“ To try how far your deception will carry you ; you have not the courage, I see, to persist in your falsehood.”

“ Falsehood !” exclaimed the petrified husband.

“ Falsehood !” reiterated the angry wife—“ falsehood is the word I used, and falsehood is the word I repeat ; you know that your visit was not to Liverpool, but to Southampton ; you know that an assignation with Miss Meadows was your business—‘ a labour you delight in,’ I have no doubt ; but early as it is in our united lives to be forced to such a measure, I feel it quite necessary to remind you—that I am your wife.”

“ There needs no refreshener to my recollection, Madam,” said Henry ; “ I am fully aware

of the fact, I assure you; and since by a contrivance as false and still more mean than any I may have been guilty of, you have become so, let me advise *you* to recollect that *I am* your husband."

"If neglect and desertion be the blessings of a wedded life, I ——"

"Stay, Madam," said Henry; "stay, I beseech you; consider the state of my feelings—consider that *I am* the person duped, deceived, betrayed!"

"How?" exclaimed Kate, (somewhat apprehensive that a counterplot was about to develop itself) "how deceived! how duped?" and her thoughts glanced like lightning upon Lavington.

"By the artifices which finally destroyed my every hope of a connexion with the object of my affections. You were, if not the contriver of the dupery, at least a principal accessory to it; therefore, although I have been led to sacrifice those expectations of happiness which I had formed in early life, I certainly shall not deny myself the pleasure of a friendly intercourse with a family I have every reason to respect and esteem."

"Friendly intercourse with a girl who has once in her life eloped with you?"

"Yes, Kate, yes," said Henry, the tears rising in his eyes; "she is as pure and as good as ——"

"Oh, nonsense!" interrupted Kate, "I have no patience with such purity and goodness. What delicacy, what high principle, what dignity of character can that girl possess, who slighted, abandoned, and discarded by a man, condescends to inveigle him away from his wife, during the honey-moon?"

"Kate," said Merton, "once for all, hear me. No earthly power shall induce me to listen to a single calumnious aspersion against that family. I will visit them when I please, and where I please; and you may assure yourself that my intimacy with them will neither tend to your unhappiness, nor diminish your respectability."

"You had better invite the young lady to come and stay with us, I think," sneered Mrs. Merton.

"Madam, be silent," said Henry; "I command you, be silent. That you should be angry at what you have discovered to be "

deception, neither surprises nor displeases me; but that you should, in the blindness of your rage, vilify and traduce innocence and virtue, spotless and pure as those of Fanny Meadows's, by inuendo or insinuation; that you should speak of *her* to me in a tone which a giant should not adopt in my presence with impunity, distracts me. I am ready to admit the impropriety of the system which, I confess, I have adopted: my motives were the best; I saw that an explanation was due to the family which I had, in appearance, injured; I certainly concealed the place of my destination and the object of my journey, out of delicacy to your feelings, which I thought might be wounded by a declaration of the truth; who the meddler is, to whom I am indebted for the disclosure of my stratagem, it is not worth my while to enquire. I admit the fact—that is sufficient, and am prepared to defend it."

"Your defence is extremely ingenious," said Kate, wickedly, "and concealing facts is, I allow, a very rational mode of sparing feelings; but as for the candour of your confession, you must excuse my bestowing more than a qualified share of praise upon it, considering that

you did not make it, till you knew you were found out. I would put the case to any arbitrator upon the face of the earth, exactly as it stands, of a man married but three days to a young and innocent creature, who quits her under the pretext of going to Liverpool upon 'odious and worrying business,' (those were your words,) and who, instead of doing any such thing, betakes himself to Southampton to enjoy the pleasure of the society of a young lady with whom he has previously eloped, and who ——"

"Stay, stay, Kate Etherington—Merton, I mean," cried Henry, "I must put an end to this. I have the highest, the most implicit confidence in your honour. I should hold myself the meanest, the basest of mankind, if I entertained a suspicion of the worthiness of your motives: do me the justice to treat me with equal liberality—I will neither say, nor hear another word upon the subject. Act according to the dictates of your heart, call your good sense and right feeling to your aid. You have *not* been injured, you have *not* been wronged; you involved me in a difficulty with the Meadowses, which it was a paramount duty

on my part to explain away. It is done: the connexion is now at an end; and I promise you, you shall never be annoyed or offended by my mentioning their name again, or even recurring to the present circumstances; but I repeat, that your observance of these conditions is essential to the maintenance of the treaty—I must be obeyed.”

Saying which, he left the room, anticipating a *scene*, in which, however, he was agreeably surprised; for Kate having satisfied her spleen by letting her husband see that she was in his secret, concluded, that her best plan was to modify and qualify, having this *faut pas* of his, always ready, as a palliation for any eccentric movement of her own; and accordingly, after a sufficient time had elapsed, to dry her tear-fraught eyes, and write a billet, descriptive of the conversation which had passed, to Lavington, she despatched her maid with a message to Henry, (which he received, just as he was sealing a long letter, wherein he had written to Fanny, an account of his detection, and its consequences,) requesting to know at what hour he had ordered the carriage to take them down to the cottage, which had

been prepared for their reception, and to which it had been fixed that they should this day remove.

This conciliatory message arrived somewhat inopportunately; however, it was irresistible, and, delivered gracefully and graciously by Mrs. Merton's maid, who had been her prime minister for three or four years, had the effect of softening the affectionate Henry. He immediately left the room where he had been writing, and proceeded to Kate, who met him with smiles and good humour, begging his pardon, half seriously and half in earnest, (with that April expression of mirth and sorrow, so bewitching in a creature like her,) for having spoken so plainly on the subject of his journey, and entreating him to attribute her warmth of manner entirely to her devotion and attachment to him.

"It's all over now, my sweet girl," said Henry, kissing her warm cheek—"and there's an end on't."

"Ah dearest," emphatically sighed Kate—"Thank Heaven, it is!"

The carriage was announced: not a moment

was lost in getting ready for their departure. Kate ran up stairs to take leave of Miss Fletcher, (who was indisposed, and had not made her appearance throughout the day,) during which trip she despatched *her* note to Sir Harry; while Henry, extremely anxious to give particular directions to his man, about packing his dressing-case, took that opportunity of forwarding *his* letter to Miss Meadows. They met in the hall—and Kate, fearful she had kept her “dear life” waiting, was handed into the carriage, into which her husband followed his “sweet angel,” without a moment’s delay, and away they went, as fast as the horses could draw them.

It was a soothing drive, he felt a little ashamed of his conduct; she felt conscious, that in fact she had nothing to find fault with. There was something healing and consolatory, however, in the prospect before them: he was about to take her to the house, in which he had lived, in which, I believe, he was born. It was the favourite residence of his father; every advantage which good taste and an elegant mind could give to so small a place, it had derived

from his improvements. Kate had never seen the interior of it, and there was the anticipation of shewing it to her, which, not only as a pleasure in itself, but as something to talk of, was most agreeable. His description of its peculiar advantages, his guessing which room she would prefer, and a variety of little endearing details, indicative of strong interest in the place, which she, who had only seen it from the road, or the adjoining grounds, listened to, with a sickening sort of listlessness, ever and anon closing her eyes, and invariably beholding Sir Harry Lavington dancing under their lids.

It had grown dusk, and Kate affected to fear danger from thieves. Henry reassured her, and drew her towards him to shelter her from cold, and apprehension; and while employed thus in soothing her alarm, and as they were safely approaching the haven of content, on the summit of a hill, which overlooked the extensive valley in which it was situated, a brilliant illumination seemed to fill the air; it flickered and varied in brightness,—it was evidently a conflagration—bonfires, perhaps, in honour of his return.

“What light is that?” said he, lowering the front glass of the carriage, and speaking to one of the postboys.

“We can’t make out rightly,” said the boy, (who was a man turned sixty, and merely a boy by virtue of his office,) “but it looks like a fire, Sir.”

“Get on then,” said Henry; “a fire is a fine sight, make the best of your way.”

They did; and for the first time in his life this amateur of fires beheld a conflagration which he did not enjoy. The reader may better imagine than I describe, his sensations when he beheld his cottage, his retreat, the home of his fathers, containing all he had in the world of personal property, in flames. As they reached the gate, the roof fell in; and a whirling myriad of stars dancing in the air, announced the final destruction of the house.

Never was ruin more complete. Kate wept and sank upon his shoulder. A murmur in the crowd assembled on the lawn, in which the word “Insured” caught his ear, and brought to his recollection the till now neglected letter from the Fire-office, which in the agony of receiving

Fanny's despatch, he had thrust into his pocket unread and unregarded—the policy had expired exactly three days before the conflagration took place.

It appeared that the servants who had it in charge to air the house for his reception, had laid the beds before the fires in the respective chambers to which they belonged: that a spark having caught the furniture while they were drinking their tea and enjoying a little agreeable conversation about their neighbours, the whole suite of apartments were in a blaze; water was, of course, scarce; engines few; and thus in an hour and a half our poor Benedict lost every thing upon earth which he could call his own—except his wife.

What was to be done with this elegant *residuum* of his personal property now puzzled him extremely; there was no inn in the village fit to accommodate her. Lady Castleton's house was too far distant to be made available; under which circumstances Kate proposed immediately returning to London. Henry expressed a wish to remain on the spot till daylight, in hopes of recovering some part of his valuables, which disposition on his part to

stay, did by no means appear to decrease her anxiety to go; the postboys, on being questioned *properly*, made no objection to returning the last stage immediately, and accordingly, the arrangement being made for Mrs. Merton to go back to Miss Fletcher's, the lovely girl took her departure from the scene of desolation, and quitting Henry with a sigh of sorrow and a smile of consolation, returned without the smallest apprehension to Curzon-street by the same road, which, in leaving town three hours earlier, under the protection of her husband, appeared so full of danger and difficulty.

CHAPTER VIII.

‘ But if for me thou dost forsake
Some other maid, and rudely break
Her worshipped image from its base
To give to me the ruined place ;

Then, FARE THEE WELL ! I ’d rather make
My bower upon some icy lake,
When thawing suns begin to shine,
Than trust to love so false as thine.”

WITH the most painful solicitude did poor Henry wait the dawn of day, when he might commence the melancholy toil of searching amongst the ruins of his fortune for some relic undestroyed ; and no sooner had the light become sufficiently strong for the purpose, than at the head of a party of workmen he commenced operations,

Long did they toil, and little did they find to reward their labours until near the middle

of the day, when they turned up from amidst the mass of smouldering wood, part of the well-known escritoire of the late Mr. Merton. Henry's heart beat with pleasure at the idea of saving this at least from the general destruction; and immediately ordered it to be carefully removed to a place of safety.

Nothing remained of this piece of furniture except the desk, and even that was so much injured that the back part of it was entirely burnt away; and as the labourers were carrying it out of the ruins, Henry perceived that the hinder part contained a secret drawer, in which he saw a packet, tied with red tape, still remaining. He followed the bearers of the load, and drew the parcel from its concealment, when, to his mortification, he discovered that all the under part of it was consumed, and that the writing, which appeared to have been voluminous, was entirely defaced, with the exception of one small corner of a page, in which the following words were only legible.

“ This most important secret—great—seventy-two thousand—elder brother—unfortunate deplored—death occurred in India—

sacred promise—divulged—in a different—the title, however, — having fulfilled—and finally relinquish the hope—that he—important charge—inevitable ——.”

Like every other accident or incident of Henry's life, this discovery was painful, mortifying, and distressing in an eminent degree. It was quite clear that this paper had contained some “most important secret,” with which his fate and destiny were perhaps intimately connected; but what *he* found of it, served only to make the “darkness visible,” and left in his mind the most worrying sensations. To know that something had existed, nay, did exist, so seriously interesting to himself as this must be, and yet to be perfectly uncertain of its nature, was enough to distract him.

The part of the affair which seemed to him by far the most mysterious, was the silence of his father during his life-time upon a matter apparently of such importance. It is true he had solemnly and seriously warned him at the time, when he undertook to mediate with Mrs. Meadows, not to press him upon “a particular subject;” but still, that he should

not have trusted him *at all*, while he was ready to confide to a certain degree in that lady, appeared to him so extraordinary, that the more he puzzled himself, the more he was perplexed.

In the midst of all these contending evils, Henry could not but remember that his entire loss of property arose from his own negligence, and, as was the case with all his other misfortunes, he himself had been the original cause of this last calamity. It was not amongst his minor evils that he discovered the necessity of staying a second day in the village, (having taken up his residence with his "medical friend,") the Insurance-office, notwithstanding the lapse of the policy, having sent down their surveyor and some other officer, whom it was considered right that Henry should meet: there was a liberality of disposition on the part of the Insurance-office, which pleased poor Merton in the midst of his sorrows, and which confirmed the high opinion he had, by report, formed generally of those useful and beneficial establishments.

On the second morning after the departure of his "dear Kate," Henry, after having taken

his breakfast with his kind host, determined upon a journey to London; and as the morning was fine, he alone, and no post-horses to be had in the village, his plan was to walk across the meadows to the high-road, where he knew he should be caught about two o'clock by one of those crack coaches, the roofs and boxes of which, by the happy and united efforts of fashion and frugality, have become the depositories of the English aristocracy.

Punctual as a tax-gatherer, the vehicle appeared, according to Henry's calculation, within two minutes of the appointed time, and, without delay or hesitation, our hero found himself on its top, where already was seated an elegant looking man, enveloped in a drab great coat, his face much muffled up, in earnest conversation with another person, who was sharing the box with the coachman.

There is nothing more absurd, nothing more repulsive, than false pride; and the leading characteristic of a truly noble mind is kindness towards, and consideration for our inferiors. But surely there is a difference between this sort of consideration, and that kind of intimacy now indulged in, between men of rank

and fashion, and the drivers of stage-coaches. It is true, such are the extravagances of youth, and the vicissitudes of human life, that in no few cases the drivers of our public carriages are honourably born, and have filled honourable stations. To these (who by the way are less noticed than their plebeian brethren) my observation does not apply; I merely allude to the "hail-fellow-well-met" intercourse which takes place between the younger branches of our nobility and gentry, and the regular stage-coachmen upon our roads. In his way, the stage-coachman is as honest and as worthy as his betters, but only *in his way*, and not in the character of an associate, or in the qualities of a companion.

In America, indeed, where colonels drive stages, and judges keep alchouses, these distinctions might seem offensive and absurd; but for Englishmen, who esteem the blessings of our constitution, and value our national establishments, it may be worth while to consider whether the gratification arising from the casual indulgence of a depraved taste for vulgarity, is adequate in its advantages to the mischief likely to arise from a system of set-

ting at defiance the usages of English society, and knocking down those barriers which the wisdom and judgment of our forefathers have placed between the servant and the master, the hireling and his lord, and—between the stage-coachman and his passengers.

On the top of the coach in question, however, this liberal system was in full vigour; and since the coachman was unable, from his circumstances or occupation, to dress like his master's customers, his master's customers were dressed as like him as possible; and in their manners, as well as habits, appeared to emulate each other in the imitation of so worthy a prototype.

What the subject of conversation with the trio might have been, Henry would not have attempted to ascertain, labouring as he was under the depression of spirits consequent upon his recent loss, had he not heard several names mentioned which were familiar to his ear.

"Why," said the coachman, who appeared to be perfectly *au fait* with his subject, "he hasn't one guinea to rub against another, Sir George; I have known him now these seven years;—always goes with me."

"Wasn't his father an admiral?" said the dandy on the box to the dandy on the roof.

"No, he was in the army. The grandfather was the first baronet," replied the dandy on the roof to the dandy on the box.

"Ay," rejoined the coachman, "the Lavingtons had a deal of property down in this county, but it all went in the old one's time."

"And how old is Harry Lavington, Sir George?" said Colonel Freeman, (the gallant and honourable member for Dartford, who was the dandy on the roof,) addressing himself to Sir George Langley, who was the dandy on the box.

"About five-and-twenty, I think," said Sir George.

"What a fool he has made of himself. And how old is the girl?"

"Two-and-twenty, I believe they told me."

"Who was she?" asked the Colonel.

"Why, that nobody exactly knows. I remember meeting her at Lady Berrington's with the Castletons, twice last year; and one day I dined with her at the Sydenhams. I always foresaw some explosion."

" Ah, she was always a wild one," said the coachman; " we know a good many of her tricks down this road. She used always to be there along with the Westerhams and the Parkers, at Cotterhill. Most people thought she was mad; my partner Bill used to call her crazy Kate."

" And the man's house was burned down only two nights ago?" observed the Colonel.

" Only Friday, Sir," said the coachman, " and by what I heard yonder, she must have been off the very next morning." — Curious coincidence, thought Harry, who listened somewhat more attentively.

" I wonder," said Sir George, " whether he got any money with her?"

" Fifteen thousand pounds, Sir George," said the coachman, correct to a guinea.

More coincidences. Henry ventured to make an enquiry, and dressing his face in what he meant to be a particularly soothing and winning smile, said to the gallant and honourable member at his side,—" Are you speaking of any affair which has just *ecclated*?"

" Yes," said the gallant and honourable

member, more moved by the presumption of the strange gentleman in putting himself on an equality of freedom with the coachman, than by any thing else—"we are talking of persons, in all probability not known to you; (this was said sneeringly,) a Mrs. Merton, who has gone off with Sir Harry Lavington. We saw them together down the road."

What an uncommonly agreeable communication! Henry stifled his agitation, but he felt himself fainting, and the deadly paleness which overspread his cheek filled his communicant with a momentary surprise; but having no conception of the tenderness of the ground upon which he was touching, and not caring one straw about his auditor or the state of his health, the circumstance did not particularly strike or interest him.

The conversation shortly took another turn, and poor Henry was left to the full enjoyment of his own thoughts; he resolved, and wisely too, to make no discovery of himself to the strangers, which could answer no good purpose; but he also resolved to abandon the coach at the town which they were then rapidly approaching, and where they would "change;" there he deter-

mined upon taking post-horses and proceeding direct to Lord Castleton's in Grosvenor-square, in order to obtain an authentic account of an event which though circumstantially detailed, he was vain enough to think improbable in the highest degree. Arrived at the said town, he leaped from the stage and ordered a chaise to London. Judge the surprise and confusion of the travelling beaux on the outside, who had descended for two minutes to warm their feet by stumping and jumping about upon the pavement before the inn-door while the teams were changed, when the landlord, to whom Henry was perfectly well known, called in a loud voice for the "first turn out," and desired the waiter to go and "see if Mr. Merton wanted any thing in the parlour."

It was too clear; the sporting triumvirate had been unwittingly discussing Kate's infidelity in the presence of her injured husband. Luckily for the feelings of all parties, the imperious coachman, who was engaged to an early dinner at six, fifteen miles beyond town, would brook no delay, and there was consequently no time for explanation—a rather lucky occurrence, for upon such a topic, and under such circum-

stances any attempt to amend or explain would only have made matters worse.

Accordingly away flew the coach, and up was driven the chaise; Henry threw himself into it, and directed the boy to Lord Castleton's in Grosvenor Square; to that house whence had issued upon him the last "detachment" of his misfortunes. Arrived at the spot, a thundering peal at his Lordship's door echoed through the neighbourhood, and in three minutes my poor hero stood before him in his library.

That all he had heard was true, it was quite evident; the agitation of the peer bespoke his feelings, but what Henry's feelings were I must leave my readers to guess, when, instead of the maledictions of an angry guardian upon an undutiful ward and a faithless wife, he heard his Lordship, so soon as he was sufficiently composed to speak, bitterly lament the destruction of his beloved Kate, occasioned as it had most undoubtedly been by the inexcusable neglect and misconduct of her husband.

Lord Castleton expressed himself in terms not the most gentle or the most soothing, upon Henry's gross and unqualified deception in

hastening from the altar to pay a visit to a former favourite; expatiated upon the unfeeling and indelicate attempt to impose upon his bride by a feigned journey to one part of the kingdom while firmly resolved upon a trip to another; and dwelt so long and so ably upon the general character of his unwarrantable behaviour, that Henry was at last fully convinced of his flagrant error, and perfectly satisfied that to *him* alone the misconduct of his wife was attributable.

His Lordship, in the midst of matters of feeling, glanced at more worldly things, and congratulated himself upon his caution with respect to the mode of settlement which he had adopted as to Kate's fifteen thousand pounds, and informed Henry, that as *he* on the one part would be released from the condition of insuring his life, according to the original stipulation, so his Lordship, on the other, considered himself fully justified in rescinding his intention of portioning Miss Etherington, who, let the primary cause have been what it might, had of course, by her conduct, terminated eternally her intercourse with his Lordship's family, and forfeited all claim to their farther protection.

Lady Castleton had taken the affair so much to heart as to be unwell, and her Ladyship had been pleased to express her positive commands that Mr. Merton should not be admitted into her presence; thus in addition to the loss of his Kate, his public dishonour, and the ridicule which would doubtless attach itself to a man who, having married for love, could only keep his wife a week, poor Henry found himself discarded by his friends, and abandoned by his connexions, as being, if not sinful himself, at least the cause of sin in others.

Harassed, broken-hearted, and miserable, he left his Lordship's mansion, and paddled down Grosvenor Street in a pouring wet day to Steevens's, where he found his own man waiting his arrival, who detailed to him with painful perspicuity all the circumstances of his lady's elopement with Sir Harry Lavington, which took place the second evening after her return from the rural excursion to her husband's burning villa. The narrative displayed in glowing colours a most extraordinary want of feeling on the part of the lady, and a most

romantic share of apparent affection on the part of her paramour.

The weather was wretched, as if purposely to add to his minor ills, and poor Merton was barely existing when a letter from the insurance-office arrived at his hotel, conveying a remarkable proof of the liberality of the Directors, who, although exonerated from their responsibility by the neglect of the insurer, had determined to present Henry with the amount which his father had during five-and-twenty years of his life paid on account of the house and furniture, stock and property, all of which were now destroyed. This amount was somewhere about six hundred pounds ; but the sum was trifling when compared with the attention and consideration of the office, which came like balm to the poor wounded mind of my hero : he saw in the soothing and solicitous tone of the well-written letter, which enclosed a cheque upon their bankers for the amount, a change in affairs and a new appearance in things in general : somebody at all events did care for him, and he doubly felt the kindness of strangers, while smarting under the neglect of his own friends and connexions.

In the midst of his consideration of this subject, and as he was beginning a polite acknowledgment of the directors' letter, and announcing his acceptance of their liberality, who should enter the coffee-room but his dear and excellent friend Charles Fitzpatrick, covered with mud, wet, and half tired to death : he had been all over London seeing his " things " packed, and his cases sent down to Blackwall ; his regiment had been ordered to India ; he had got his Lieutenant-colonelcy, and was going out in command ; in short, he was as happy as a prince.

Charles's fine, rosy, good-tempered, laughing countenance, afforded a most striking contrast to poor Henry's pale and placid melancholy face ; and the doleful appearance of the unhappy husband, whose misfortunes were wholly unknown to his gallant friend, induced some remarks which led to a candid explanation, and Henry detailed at length his career since the happy day when his fascinating Kate had blest his love.

" And where is this Sir Harry ? " said Fitzpatrick.

" Faith, I don't know," answered Henry.

" What ! is he skulking ? — have you had

him out? My dear friend, I vow to Gad, upon the honour of a gentleman, there's myself and my pistols quite at your service, if you can but nail him any time to-morrow." •

• "I have no intention of taking any such measures," said Henry; "I feel I have wounded poor Kate too deeply already!"

"Oh, what has that to do with it? You don't mean to make out that a little neglect in a husband is to justify a woman in going wrong; —tut, tut,—that's not reasonable:—there's my poor dear sister, look at her;—there's Burke and his bunting at Corfu, or some such place; gad, look at her, as exemplary a creature as ever drew breath, upon the honour of a gentleman!"

"Yes; but he is absent on his country's service, and ——".

"Oh, I can't argue these points; I'd be glad just to fall in with Sir Harry Lavington myself, now; faith, I'd teach the young gentleman manners, that's all."

"Don't let us dwell upon the subject unnecessarily, my dear Fitzpatrick," said Henry; "my line is taken —I have decided upon my part." •

“ Oh, then I’ve done.—I could only offer myself for one day; for I’m off—sail the day after to-morrow, and am away just now to dine with the master of my ship at some infernal place in the city.”

“ No, my dear Charles,” exclaimed Henry, “ do me the last kindness you can confer before your departure, dine with *me* to-day.”

“ Faith, I vow to Gad, upon the honour of a gentleman, how can I? I’ve promised this Captain Doughboy to take a chop at a house somewhere by the Exchange.”

“ Consider, my dear Charles, you will have his society every day for the next five months; and ——”

“ Faith, that’s true, now; and yet, upon my life, I’d give the world to stay; but ——”

“ Send a porter with a note;—say your sister wishes you to stop; and ——”

“ Say my sister!—what the devil should I take the liberty of mentioning my sister’s name to the man at all for? faith, I’ll just tell him the plain truth; I vow to Gad, that’s what I always do; and I do as I’d be done by; but the truth is, I have promised him five hundred and ninety-two pounds,” said Charles, look-

ing at a memorandum he held in his hand, "and I never break my word."

"Send him the money, then," said Henry.

"That's just the thing I cannot do. You have hit it. I must go. Here you perceive, I've got a bill at twenty days, accepted by Saddington, Wynch, and Colville, the big bankers, for six hundred pounds; but I must go into the city to my brother-in-law's agent, who will give me the cash for it to-day, because it will come due after I have sailed, d'ye mind that, now?"

"If that's all," said Henry, "dine with me you shall; for here is a cheque upon the bankers of the Insurance Company for six hundred and two pounds; give me your bill at twenty days. I'll pay it in to my banker's, and you can send this ready money to your skipper."

"A bright thought, by Jove," cried Charles: "you are a jewel, upon my honour; as if this would not save my jingling into that dirty city, and dining in a tavern where the waiters are obliged to hold lighted candles at noon day before the tables, that men who are eating may find the way to their own mouths."

"I am delighted at *this*," said Henry; "the

soothing voice of friendship will sound to me like the music of the spheres !”

“ Then,” said Charles, “ all I have to do is, to give you some small change over and above the bill. Here, waiter ! bring some paper and things to write, and get a fellow to go for me with a note to Cowper’s-court, Cornhill.”

“ Coming, Sir, immediately !” was the answer ; and in less than ten minutes the acceptance of Messrs. Saddington, Wynch, and Colville, together with the trifling balance, was in the pocket-book of my hero, and the liberal donation of the Insurance Company on its way to Capt. Doughboy at his broker’s.

The association of Henry with his warm-hearted friend during the remainder of the day was essentially beneficial to him ; there was a kind, generous solicitude in all Fitzpatrick’s suggestions and enquiries which quite won the softened heart of my poor hero ; for most true it is, that sorrow and affliction dispose the mind to the reception of impressions which in days of gaiety and happiness would take no effect upon it ; their conversation was of a character bordering upon “ garrulous senility ;” they began to talk over their boyish days ; (for

though Charles was considerably Henry's senior, still they had tasted similar pleasures in the same scenes,) and as they reclined upon their seats in Bond-street, either fancied himself stretched beneath the spreading elm-tree in Taylor's close, or lingering near the well-known hawthorn in Williams's meadows.

It was late ere they parted. Mrs. Burke was far away from London; so that a retreat to her new villa in the Regent's Park was not proposed; and it was with unfeigned regret, undiminished affection, and in the firm hope of meeting again in happier days, and under brighter circumstances, that the attached friends separated for a long and indefinite period.

To his chamber, to his bed poor Henry retired; but sleep, "Nature's soft nurse," refused to "weigh his eye-lids down," or

"Steep his senses in forgetfulness."

He lay racked with his own thoughts, the recollections of past days, and the narrow escapes he had made from happiness and comfort; and it was not till the morning was far advanced that he obtained the slightest repose.

Charles, on the other hand, was so full of

his expedition, of the hope of glory, and the chance of distinguishing himself, that he was equally wakeful: he was calculating what "old M'Gregor would say to his regimental promotion;" resolving upon regulations to be established in the mess on the voyage out; winding up his accounts as to who were the best officers and most gentlemanly men in his regiment; wondering whether he should get a command; whether a staff-appointment was compatible with his present rank; whether he could draw full batta in peace-time; and whether it would be a wise thing to take out a private European servant; all these matters, in which love mingled not, kept the gallant officer from sleeping; and thus the two friends, from causes, it must be admitted, perfectly distinct, passed a night devoid of refreshment. In the morning their destinations were widely different. Charles proceeded to Blackwall to conclude his arrangements, and Henry called upon Mrs. Meadows, of whose arrival in town he had been just and seasonably apprised by his servant.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Who steals *my* purse, steals trash, 'tis something,
Nothing.”——

HENRY, when he abandoned, (that is, if he ever entertained,) the intention of calling out Sir Harry Lavington, made up his mind to commence legal proceedings against him; to which conduct he was moved, rather by a wish to vindicate himself before the world, than by any desire of “making money” by his dishonour. His acquaintance lay a good deal amongst lawyers, and by a sort of semi-professional consultation with one or two *aspirants* below the bar, he was firmly convinced of the advantages likely to accrue from a serious prosecution of his purpose.

He accordingly laid his case before an eminent solicitor, who most decidedly encouraged that disposition to litigate, the symptoms of which my hero very visibly exhibited; and having given his advice, at a small charge, as to the line to be pursued, two or three counsel were immediately retained, notice of action served upon Lavington, and every preparation made for commencing the attack in Trinity Term, then next ensuing.

It may appear, unless I explain myself, as if I intended to cast a stigma upon the legal profession, or, at least, upon that branch of it which has, time out of mind, been exposed to the censure, railing, and senseless satire of ignorance and vulgarity. The attorney to whom Henry applied, was a man, (like whom, there are many more "of the same trade,") honest, honourable, able, and active, but he laboured under one great disadvantage, common to all lawyers—he could only get an *ex parte* state of a case, with the whole of which, and its bearings, he ought to have been made acquainted, in order to judge its merits fairly.

Disguise to a physician, or a lawyer, is a sort

of minor insanity. I allow, that there is a difficulty in admitting one's folly, or one's imprudence, to its actual extent; but a man, determined upon taking advice, should also determine to put his counsellor in possession of every thing necessary to qualify him for giving it. It is to this backwardness of confession, this delicacy of feeling towards "*self*," that more law-suits are attributable, than to any thing else—it is this scrupulousness of shewing one's self up, that gives to the half-informed adviser the appearance of encouraging litigation, without a reasonable expectation of success. Had Henry candidly, and at length, detailed all his conduct subsequent to his marriage, I have no doubt, his infatuation, his deception, his absolute desertion of Mrs. Merton, would have weighed seriously with Mr. Templeman, in the counsel he had to give; as it was, he saw, only the injured, outraged husband; and, upon the narrowed view of the case which he was permitted to take, decided that exemplary damages would proclaim its hardship, and stamp the opinion of an honest jury, upon one of the most barbarous, and heart-breaking instances of wanton infidelity on the part of a

wife, that ever disgraced the annals of the fashionable world.

Attendance upon this very solicitor delayed the client in his call upon Mrs. Meadows, who, it seemed, had taken lodgings in that street, so celebrated in London for institutions, book-shops, clubs, chapels, china-warehouses, and Eau de Cologne, ycleped Albemarle. Thither his anxious steps directed him, and he was ushered upstairs into a drawing-room, where he found, as lovely as ever, his divine Fanny—but, alas! engaged in a *tête-à-tête* with a remarkably good-looking, graceful gentleman, whose name and person were unknown to my hero, but whose appearance there, was by no means agreeable or satisfactory to him.

“Major Rushbrook,” said Fanny, colouring like crimson as she introduced the gallant officer to Henry, who at the moment bowed with as much civility as he could muster upon the occasion. But the store of good-humour which he displayed was soon exhausted. Mrs. Meadows was out, and this pair of people had been sitting there, perhaps for hours, and, as far as every appearance went, seemed inclined to sit there for hours to come. The Major had

evidently "taken up a position," and although my poor hero fidgeted about the room, walked to the window, tambourined the panes with his fingers, looked out, then strolled to the fireplace, then took up the Morning Post, and then laid it down again, still the Major was immovable; and leaning over the corner of the sofa-table, behind which Fanny was seated, he assiduously engaged her in a murmuring sort of half-broken conversation, killing, without being in the smallest degree intelligible, to poor Henry.

"What was Fanny doing?" She was—working—that is to say, she was industriously hemming a long narrow strip of muslin (destined for what purpose none but female freemasons can even guess), such as all young ladies of a domestic turn, sit and hem, and every now and then tear down with a splitting noise, and hem over again, I believe, and afterwards lock up in boxes with as much ceremony and seriousness as if they had been *really* doing something all day, or as if the long narrow nothings upon which they had been affecting to employ themselves, were actually of some use or value.

But although Henry saw Fanny was doing something, he saw also that the Major was by

no means idle. Henry had no right to be angry, to be sure, he had no right to be out of humour—he was a marr'd man, that is to say, a married one, terms which, in cases like the present, at all events, are nearly synonymous. But the recollection that he had a wife, did not at all tend to allay the irritation which he laboured to conceal, but which, nevertheless, was quite evident to his rival, who rather than otherwise, enjoyed the sensation he felt himself producing. Fanny was not so foolish, or so frivolous, as to encourage her new admirer seriously; but still there was a dash of the *woman* even about *her*. She loved this little domestic *éclat*, and felt pleased that she could prove to Henry what she *might* do in the way of conquest, were she disposed at once to break the bonds, which, by an extremely natural, though I am afraid somewhat immoral understanding, still existed between them.

A lover on the tenter-hooks of jealous doubt is a great treat either to a cold-blooded spectator, or a successful rival. The *distract* manner—the innumerable nothingnesses he talks, by way of conversation—the occasional allusions to foregone circumstances, made in hopes of recalling the dear trifle to

a proper sense of feeling—the alternate glowing and chilling sensations he endures—the rapid succession in which every finger-nail is bitten to the quick—the total carelessness of all extraneous matter, all foreign subjects, all absent things—the affectation of perfect carelessness—the ghastly smiles peeping through the gloom of his agitated countenance, like a winter's sun in a showery day:—all these symptoms did poor Henry exhibit, all these symptoms did Fanny perceive, and yet never did the little rogue alter her behaviour, or mend her manners.

The truth is, Fanny was piqued—she saw by Henry's conduct that he “doubted.” Entire confidence is the thing the woman dearly loves. Trust her but with half your secret, she is sure to gain the other without feeling any obligation to keep it;—confide in her altogether, and she will never deceive. Henry ought to have known her well enough to know, that this Major, though heir to a baronetcy, with a good person and unexceptionable manners, was not, in point of fact, half so attractive as many of those, whom she had already rejected. She had her motives for tolerating his addresses, which he paid under the sanction of

her mother. She could have no power to check his acquaintance, no plea for refusing to receive him, till his attentions assumed a decided shape. To this point she saw they were hastening rapidly, and, in order to bring them on, she took advantage of the unseasonable visit of Henry, being, as she saw, an event likely, under the circumstances, to accelerate the crisis.

This manœuvre, which her mother had originally played off upon Merton himself, was a harmless one on the part of the daughter; indeed, Major Rushbrook himself was aware, as who was not? that this intruder had been the favoured lover, the destined husband of Fanny; yet, knowing of his subsequent marriage, without knowing all the circumstances which led to it, and knowing of his recent misfortune without being aware of its actual cause, he felt himself secure, little thinking that Fanny's wounded dignity would be so soon healed, or her offended pride so speedily appeased—the Major little understood what love can do.

Henry endured the purgatory of the Major's flirtation for about three quarters of an hour, when, finding Fanny not disposed to be roman-

tically fond of *him*, and seeing that she sat still and listened to his rival, his feelings took a new direction, and snatching up his hat and gloves, he resolved upon quitting the scene of action, thus leaving the enemy in possession of the field, and cutting himself out of a warm and cordial invitation to dine with the ladies, which Mrs. Meadows had left for him with Fanny, in case he should call in her absence, but which she could not conveniently deliver to him, before the Major, to whom it was not intended the civility should extend. From this very injudicious movement, not only did Henry's absence from the house at dinner result, but the Major being still there when Mrs. Meadows returned, was invited to accept the seat at their board, which his discomfited opponent had unwittingly surrendered; and, to crown all, Lady Melford having lent Mrs. Meadows her box at Covent-Garden theatre for the night, the said Major, of course, made the third of the family party, which was destined to occupy it.

Henry dined at the Piazza coffee-house alone, went to the play, and sat immediately opposite to them; this appeared to be *quantum sufficit* for

the day. He had not the courage, or perhaps I should say the temper, to go and join them, but remained till they left the box, watching every action of Fanny and the Major with a mournful pleasure, a dreadful interest, indescribable to those who have never known the pangs of him,

“ Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves.”

It was a mountain laid upon the camel's back, when he was so laden already that a straw would have broken it.

He left the theatre in time to see the party quit the private box-door; by the flaring of the link he saw his delicate Fanny handed into the olive-green chariot; he saw her mother follow her; he saw the Major shake hands with the ladies; but he saw the carriage drive off without him. That was something, at any rate; and quite delighted with this little qualifying beam of sunshine, he returned to Steevens's to bed.

The night was tempestuous, dark, and rainy, and when Mrs. Meadows's carriage drove up to the door of her lodgings, a murmuring conversation caught her ear, carried on between the servant and a female, whose voice appeared weak, and as if she was ill, and in pain; the man spoke harshly, and talked authorita-

tively of the watchman. Mrs. Meadows enquired, and was told it was a drunken woman, who had fallen on the steps and could not move.

“Oh no, no, Madam,” said a voice piteously plaintive.

“I think not,” said Mrs. Meadows—“at all events it is a woman—there needs no other plea with me.” And accordingly, much to the surprise of the servants, who felt, as such persons invariably feel, an indescribable contempt for any thing “low and vulgar,” the poor creature was lifted up, and brought into the hall.

She was pale, pale as death, and icy cold, but her features were beautiful, and there was an expression of gratitude in her fine eyes—for she could not speak, poor soul—that struck to the heart of dear kind Fanny:—all worldly considerations vanished, and as the tender girl parted the luxuriant tresses on the white forehead of her hapless guest, she saw enough to prepossess and interest her in her fate.

To turn the helpless creature into the street at that hour—to subject her to the petty tyranny of a parish constable, and the accommodation of the watch-house, would have been just, and prudent, and worldly, and wise, and cautious.

Men of rank, of fortune, and of character, live in this town in perpetual fear of being deceived by unworthy objects, into a misapplication of charity. They tell you, that they subscribe to charitable institutions, where, without *the trouble* of investigating the different cases which occur, their money is devoted to the relief of the poor, without a chance of their being imposed upon.—I would give ten thousand pounds per annum, (if I had it to give,) for the mere possibility.

What! can men regulate their benevolence, and lay down a system of philanthropy? Will they, from the fear of once being deceived, suffer hundreds to starve around them? Will they, to save the trouble of searching into, and personally relieving distress, confine their liberality to an annual donation to some public establishment, in whose lists of contributors their names are to stand printed in capitals opposite to the sum which they have subscribed? Ay, will they, and reason upon it when it is done.—Mrs. Meadows was differently disposed. She saw a helpless creature in distress, in poverty, in wretchedness. She did not stop to philosophize—she did not tarry to enquire into the cause of

what she saw: it was a sufferer who lay before her—she raised her up, and ordered her nourishment, attendance, and a comfortable bed. Nor was my sylph-like Fanny, too proud or delicate to minister to the poor creature's comforts. With her own hand did she carry to her bed-side mulled wine, and other nourishment. But what will my "double-refined" readers say, when I confess, that in the absence of the housekeeper, who was in the country, getting ready for their return home, Fanny herself, prepared the cordials which she administered? All *I* say about it is, may the blessing of Heaven light upon her, for her tender sympathy, and unaffected solicitude!

After every care had been taken of their "patient," Mrs. Meadows and her daughter retired to rest; they slept nothing the worse for the benevolent acts with which they had crowned the day, and were early in the breakfast-room. Having made their enquiries after the unfortunate stranger, they heard with pleasure, that she was much better, and entreated permission to come and return her thanks for their protection; but, with whatever satisfaction they might have received this information,

they were assuredly not prepared to expect what they saw, when she made her appearance for that purpose.

Refreshed by a night's comfortable sleep and the strengthening aliment she had taken, she looked a different being; indeed, so striking was the change, that Mrs. Meadows could with difficulty be persuaded of her identity.

Mrs. Meadows was one of those persons with whom beauty had more than its due weight; she judged the work somewhat superficially by the frontispiece, and invariably took a handsome face as earnest for an honest heart. We are all, more or less, like Mrs. Meadows, I believe: there is a certain prepossessing something in good looks which is quite undefinable, but which, nevertheless, is invariably successful. The moment the lady of the house raised her glass and beheld in the desolate wanderer of the preceding night a creature all symmetry, all grace and beauty, with dark-blue eyes beaming under long silken sloe-black lashes; mild, unassuming, and elegant in her manners, and tremblingly alive to the peculiarity of her present situation,—the die was cast, her fate was decided, and with a romantic enthusiasm al-

most equal to that of the German ladies in the Anti-jacobin, she formed an "eternal friendship" with her, in her own mind, on the instant.

Fanny was equally stricken by her manner and appearance, and instead of being consigned to any inferior apartment, or destined to the comparative luxuries of the second table, the new comer was received with marked attention by Mrs. Meadows, who was immediately convinced that her guest must be a dignified damsel in distress; nobody upon earth could feel a warmer regard for a Tuft in trouble than she, who, in point of fact, as indeed it may have been remarked, was a complete "quality Tag."

She was destined, however, not long to be the victim of appearances; for scarcely had their breakfast commenced and the commonplace enquiries after the stranger's health ended, than the visitor, bursting into tears, exclaimed in a heart-rending tone, that if she had discovered who her benefactress was, no power on earth would have induced her to accept her hospitable care.

Astonished at finding themselves not only known by, but evidently objects of interest,

and painful interest, to their visitor Mrs. Meadows and Fanny entreated her to compose herself, and give them her reasons for this hostility.

“It is not hostility,” said the stranger; “it is a consciousness that of all houses in London, I ought not to be in yours, Madam: for strange as it may appear, and miraculous as it seems to me, we are in a certain degree connected by circumstances, and I feel that in explaining away the mystery in which my extraordinary appearance last night is involved, I must allude to one, in whose fate you must have been deeply interested, and to whose name I should most unwillingly refer.”

Mrs. Meadows declared her innocence of understanding what her fair friend meant.

“Madam,” said the weeping girl, “I have been the sport of fortune, the victim of a misplaced affection; its consequences have been, since my father’s death, the abandonment of my next natural protectors, but so deeply rooted is the attachment in my heart, that neither the ill treatment I have received, nor my eternal separation from the object of it, can alter or diminish it.”

The interest originally created for the young

woman in the hearts of the two ladies, was mightily increased by this manifestation of constancy.

“ I honestly confess,” continued the stranger, “ that my error was vanity; the man upon whom my affections were fixed, and who won them by every tender assiduity lover could devise, moved in a much superior rank of life to mine, and I might at all events have learned a dreadful lesson of disappointment, even had the circumstance in which you are both deeply concerned not occurred.”

Still Mrs. Meadows was in the dark.

“ I was taught to love and left to mourn; my father’s anger was excited by my firm reliance on *him* in whom I trusted, and I was discarded by that good old man, now no more; I sought *him* who was my only hope, and who would, I think, have realized all the promises he had made; but—Oh, Madam! spare—spare me, forgive me—pardon me! I cannot command my feelings, when I recollect all the circumstances.—The very week after I reached London in search of him, I heard that he had been shot in a duel, near my native village, which I had left in quest of him.”

“ Shot !” exclaimed Mrs. Meadows, “ and known to us ?”

“ Yes—yes, Madam, known to you, and most of all to you, dear young lady,” exclaimed the half-frantic girl; “ it was—Felton—my own Felton—”

“ Mr. Felton !” cried Fanny.

“ Yes, Miss Meadows, yes;—for him I sacrificed the affection of a father, my peaceful home, and the quiet enjoyment of a happy life;—it was for Felton who died before he had ratified those promises which I know he meant to fulfil when he made them.”

“ And how long have you left your father’s house ?” asked Mrs. Meadows.

“ Now nearly five months, Madam,” replied the still weeping girl. “ Since his death I lived with a relation and her husband near town, and contributed my share to their expense of housekeeping by needle-work ; but she, alas ! died last week, and her husband—Oh ! don’t ask me any more—I could not stay there another hour. I had no place to go to, and I was endeavouring to find my way to a friend of her who is gone, somewhere in the Edgeware-road ; having been three days without

tasting food, and the whole of yesterday without a place to rest my weary limbs ; too proud to beg, I hoped to conceal my misery by delaying my visit to her till evening, but the effort was too much for me ; and after being insulted and struck to the ground by a ruffian near your door, I sunk upon the step, and had lain there some time unperceived—I conclude, —till your return home.”

Here was another “curious coincidence ;” and it sounds, I admit, a little improbable ; that it is true, I happen to know, and extraordinary indeed was that combination of events which could group in Mrs. Meadows’s breakfast parlour, Mrs. Meadows herself, Fanny Meadows the idol of Felton, and Mary Graham his victim ; such was the case, and into the ears of her tender benefactresses did this simple cottage-girl pour all her distresses, omitting in the catalogue of her sorrows, those alone which had accrued to her, from her *own error*, to which, in the midst of her candour and communicativeness, she never once alluded in the slightest manner.

The task of consolation is sweet, and Fanny mingled with her compassion for Mary a little

feeling of gratification at having this living proof of Felton's insincerity in his affected love for *her*; which, it will be remembered, he was offering at the very time when Mary expected him hourly to make reparation for *that* injury which she now so carefully concealed from her new friends. The treatment she experienced from her father on the night of her expulsion from his house, occasioned an event which, while it endangered her life at the moment, saved her reputation; and, except the reader and old Mrs. Gage of Haversfield, no human being alive at this moment is aware of the *consequences* of her ill-fated attachment to her libertine lover.

Never could event have happened more propitiously for Mary Graham than that to which she was indebted for her introduction into the Meadows' family, for Mrs. Meadows chanced to be intimately acquainted with the bosom friend of the late Mr. Felton, and who was moreover a frequent correspondent of his father's; to him she applied in behalf of her fair *protégée*, with what success we shall hereafter see; in the mean time Fanny supplied Mary with such articles of dress as she stood in need

of, and it was quite determined that until something decided should be known from Felton's friends, she should remain where she was. And thus the poor victim of seduction, thanks to her prudence, and, above all, her pretty face, found herself comfortably established in the camp of the enemy—in the home of her former rival.

In the mean time, Trinity term rapidly approached, and the trial of *Merton v. Lavington* was at hand. The plaintiff occasionally called at the Meadows's, but it was long before he came to any thing like an explanation with Fanny, nor do I think he was really satisfied or felt secure, till, as might be anticipated, one fine morning Major Rushbrook put that most awful question to his adored *Dulcinea*, to which she returned an astounding negative, which drove him half mad, and sent him off post-haste to join his regiment at Brighton.

This obstacle removed, Henry recovered a certain portion of *his* gaiety, which was at best of a moony sort, and never latterly amounted to any thing like real mirth: however, the anticipation that the verdict would, if followed up by the necessary proceedings, rid him of

his wife, kept him in a state of agreeable excitement, and held out hopes of brighter days to come.

One day, some week perhaps after the dismissal of Rushbrook, Henry was dining with the Meadowses, who were going to Mrs. Saddington's assembly in Russell-square. It may be advantageously observed here, that this lady was the dashing wife of the eminent banker, whose acceptance to a bill due the next day my hero had in his pocket. To this party Mrs. Meadows pressed him to accompany them, never forgetting, as I hope my readers never will, that he, the said Henry Merton, Esq. held an appointment under government of some four-and-twenty hundred pounds per annum, and was therefore a more suitable and agreeable companion for herself and daughter, than when he was "a single gentleman three months ago," with no estate save that, which lay under his hat, and no income except that derivable from property entirely at the disposal of his father.

Henry at first objected ; but never having seen much of that part of the town in which this semi-fashionable lived, and desirous of ascer-

taining how people "make it out" in the recesses of Bloomsbury and the wilds of Guildford Street, and feeling that "all the world to him" would be there, at length agreed to go, and accordingly proceeded with the ladies in their carriage through Oxford-street, St. Giles's, Tottenham-court-road and so past Dyott-street, and the British Museum, to the remote scene of gaiety, which they, however, reached in perfect safety. Arrived there, if it had not been for the undisguisable distance at which it was placed from all the civilized part of the world, nobody would have discovered that they were amongst a different race of people from that which inhabit our part of the metropolis.

Such names as were announced "coming up," Mr. Fish and Mrs. Plush, and Miss Duggin and Mr. Coggin, and Lady Grubb and Sir George Pott, and Mrs. Hogg and Mrs. Moakes, and Miss Cowcross, and Mr. Crump and Mrs. Grout, and Miss Gill;—it all sounded like Hebrew to the unaccustomed ear; but when they really were in the rooms, which to do them justice were hot enough, and disagreeable enough to be quite fashionable, these persons with the odd names looked just

as well as their betters; and as it is not the custom to label ladies and gentlemen as one labels decanters, it all did mighty well.

They were a good deal finer, to be sure: gold and jewels, and greengage-coloured velvets, and crimson and fringe, and flounces and tassels, and tawdry necklaces and earrings, abounded; but the girls perked themselves up, and wriggled themselves about, and flirted their fans, and rapped their partners' arms (for they danced quadrilles after the manner of Almack's,) and gave themselves all the little coquettish airs of their superiors. But the rooms, somehow, smelt badly; they had no more idea of *Eau à bruler* than they had of nectar; and the people drank hot punch, which was handed about in little tumblers by under-sized livery servants in cotton stockings and without powder; in short, it was altogether vastly oppressive. However, there was a tremendous supper, and a Lord Mayor to partake of it; and the solemn gravity with which his Lordship (who was in full dress, sword, chain, and all) was treated, was eminently ludicrous. (His Lordship was a shoemaker, or a linen-draper, or something of that

sort.) However, the latter part of the night was "uncommon good fun," and the whole affair would have been very diverting to my hero, had he not wound it up by the following brief, yet pithy dialogue with young Wilson, who, our readers may remember, lived in Albany, and undertook to convey Henry's note to Miss Neville, to whom, if report may be believed, he was at this very period about to be married.

"Faith," said Wilson, taking Henry into a corner, "this party is one of the most extraordinary events that ever occurred in the mercantile world."

"Very pleasant," said Henry, thinking he might be a friend of the family, and meaning to be very civil.

"Very pleasant to *us*," replied Wilson, "but any thing else, I should think, to the creditors!"

"Ah! how's that?" asked Merton.

"Why, the thing is not the least blown," answered his friend; "but the fact is, I happen to know that the house of Saddington, Wynch, and Colville, have stopped payment."

"Stopped!" exclaimed Henry, mechanically

feeling his pocket-book, and squeezing it tightly,—“ stopped, do you say ?”

“ Don’t use that word so loudly,” rejoined Wilson ; “ it is true, at least I know for a certainty that to-morrow morning the thing will be public. You see that Saddington himself is not here.”

“ I don’t know him,” said Merton, “ and therefore did not miss him ; but *are* you serious ?”

“ As ever I was in my life ; and I am afraid there will be some long faces to-morrow that are laughing to-night.”

“ Why,” said Merton, “ I myself happen to have their acceptance for six hundred pounds in my pocket at this moment, ready to present in the morning.”

“ Then I’d advise you to sit down to supper, and take as much of it in kind, as you can get, for I am told that threepence in the pound will be the outside of the dividend.”

Henry had no great appetite for supper. The six hundred pounds in question was all the ready money he had in the world ; and therefore not fancying it possible that his ill-luck could pursue him even to Russell-square, he

lived upon a pleasing doubt till the morning, when, posting off as soon after nine as he possibly could, he reached the banking-house, found Wilson's intelligence perfectly true, and the shutters closed, as if the whole firm had been dead, this *dénouement* having been purposely delayed, in order that the crash might not interfere with the squeeze, that is to say, that the bankruptcy in the afternoon might not prevent the banquet in the evening; and with this adventure ended my poor hero's hopes of ever again seeing his six hundred and two pounds eighteen shillings and sixpence, for that was the precise sum—errors excepted.

END OF VOL. II.

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